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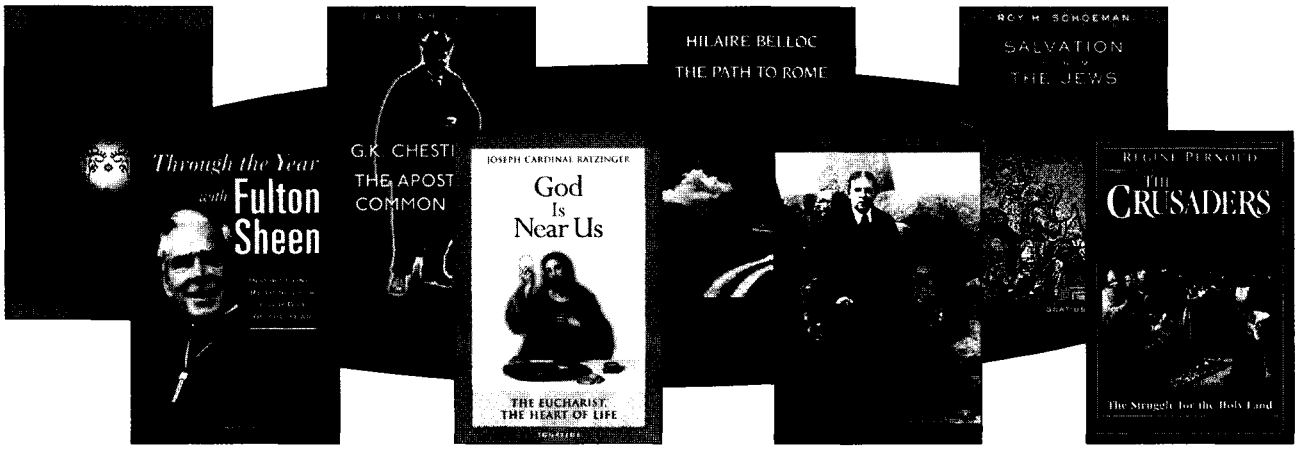

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CORRESPONDENCE

Against the Marriage Amendment

Your editorial statement "The Marriage Amendment" (October 2003) rests on two premises: 1) the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and 2) the belief that the federal government should sanction this definition and have the power to confer benefits based upon it.

In regard to the first premise, the word "union" needs to be unpacked. As a working definition I will assume you mean a committed relationship based upon a profound love, wherein the mutually beneficial actions in which two people engage, be they emotional, sexual, or financial, are recognized to be exclusive to themselves. I thus identify a certain level of love as the defining characteristic, not its manifestations (although the manifestations which do exist would have to be in accord with that love). Sex and procreation cannot be the defining characteristics of marriage. If you say they are, you not only exclude gay people, but all couples who do not want or cannot have children.

You repeatedly imply that the basis for same-sex union is an interest in sex. After noting that "there are a few gays who express admiration for traditional marriage and say they simply want to be included in its benefits" you reply that:

> They are not excluded by others; they are excluded by their identity as gays. To be homosexual is a condition; to be gay is a decision. Some say no other decision is available to them, but that is not true. Sexual temptations, like other temptations, can be resisted.

Of course, sexual attraction is a major factor at the beginning of any romantic union, but, as I'm sure you'll agree, as a relationship progresses it becomes transformed into an expression of love. Lust apart from love disappears. I can assure you, based on my own experience and the observation of close friends, that this phenomenon occurs in homosexual couples. Being a homosexual *is* a decision, but not to give in to a sexual temptation—rather to deeply love someone of one's own sex.

If you agree that a committed relationship based on a certain level of love is at least a cardinal characteristic of marriage, what is the basis for making the requirement that this relationship be between a man and a woman? The only answer I can find in your statement is that it promotes social order by containing "the unbridled sexual activity of the human male." The premise behind this argument is that it is a legitimate function of the state to engage in preventative measures to dissuade immoral behavior which will have deleterious consequences, e.g., producing unwanted and unloved children.

This bring me to the second premise of the statement. Should the government be concerned with preventing and/or punishing immorality per se, or only preventing and punishing the harmful consequences to innocent victims, e.g., children? I would say the latter. From the state's point of view, marriage is a contractual agreement which it has a vested interest in upholding (as it does all other formal contracts). Is there any other basis of the state sanction of marriage? If there isn't, why can't the contract be between persons of the same sex? I can't see how it is the state's business

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to sanction any aspect of an agreement other than its formal contractual elements.

Bruce Marr
Brooklyn, New York

The Roots of Nihilism

Many thanks to David B. Hart for his exquisitely written, magisterial article, "Christ and Nothing" (October 2003).

If I may nuance the article's thesis: to posit nihilism in the ancient world is not free of a certain anachronism. Should one nonetheless seek to uncover the roots of nihilism in ancient Greek thought, one would need to unearth them in atomistic materialism (regarding Nietzsche), or in Protagoras (regarding Hiedegger's pseudo-ethics of "authenticity"). Contemporary nihilism is rightly linked by Mr. Hart to the absolute primacy of freedom of choice (and not freedom of determination, though that is another story). Culturally, this freedom is being played out in terms of materialistic Epicureanism in one form or another (utilitarian, hedonistic, etc.).

Mr. Hart attempts to escry the roots of nihilistic dialectic in Platonic dualism. Although I think that he grants too much to Nietzschean animus and Heideggerian historico-epistemology on this point, the Platonic physical universe is indeed portrayed as one of deceptive illusions. But to label the relationship between act and potency as "dialectic" would seem to overlook the whole point of these two *meta*-physical principles, which must be understood in the light of final, and not merely efficient, causality, if one accepts Aristotle's claim that potency is *in view of* act. As for the alleged Neoplatonic nihilism, even if one were to grant it, it would be in terms of the Pseudo-Dionysian *apophasis* regarding God which has borne perennial fruit in mystical theology. Both the rejection of teleology and ersatz mysticism are unmistakably at the root of Nietzscheo-Heideggerian nihilism.

When Christ meets Pilate, the focal point is indeed the question of truth, as evidenced by the divinely noble affirmation: "I was born and came into the world to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). But the philosopher cannot help but be reminded of Socrates before his accusers. Mr. Hart's reflection could be enriched by stressing the striking proximity between revealed truth and philosophical truth, especially in their "happy marriage" in Aquinas. The divorce occasioned by Luther and the Reformation is clearly at the root of contemporary nihilism. Nietzsche's hatred of religion was something of a reaction to the harsh reprobating God of his Protestant youth, and Heidegger eventually became a nondenominational Protestant after leaving the Catholic Church, since he did not see the former as in any way incompatible with his nihilism. The Reformers created hostility between faith and reason where there had been harmony, thus incarnating the voluntarism and nominalism (duly noted by Mr. Hart) in a worldview whose clearly nihilistic theological consequences were the doctrines of positive reprobation, the sacramental Real Absence of Christ in the Eucharist, total depravity, etc.

May these reflections be received amicably as buttressing Mr. Hart's theses, since that is how they are intended.

Mark J. Barker
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
University of Saint Thomas
Houston, Texas

David B. Hart replies:

I thank Professor Barker for his letter, which deserves a longer reply; here I can offer only a few technical observations.

Regarding my "anachronism"—I never posited nihilism in the ancient world *tout court*; a truly pre-Christian nihilism (in the special post-Jacobian sense of the word) is unimaginable. Rather, I summarized a certain hermeneutical narrative regarding the remote causes of Western thought's "nihilistic terminus," ironically agreed with aspects of it, and inverted its central claim. I agree with many Catholic philosophers (especially the remarkable Erich Przywara) in seeing within even the greatest of the classical syntheses certain (tragic) ambiguities for which only Christian theology could provide the solution. Antique wisdom was an enigma to itself until the creator God revealed Himself within it; and that enigma returns as nihilism—stripped of all metaphysical ornament—when philosophy is detached again from theology by that rather sordid catastrophe "modernity."

Also, it is perfectly correct, when addressing the Aristotelian understanding of act and potency in the "sublunary" world, to speak of "dialectic" (with a particular Hegelian acceptation), precisely *because* potency is "in view of act." What arises and perishes enjoys only an imperfect, fleeting liaison between *hyle* and *morphe*, and must die each instant to be born anew. Unlike, say, astral intelligences, mutable beings exhaust their potency only when they cease to be, and death is the price they pay to "become what they are." Such is the lot of all that dwells here below, between *arche kineseos* and *telos*, and between form and the chaos of the "infinite" (*apeiron*).

It is in Christian metaphysics that a different model emerges. Gregory of Nyssa, for instance, in the fourth century, first offered a coherent account of a *positive* infinity—that of the transcendent God—which allowed him to understand becoming as the effect of the relation between finite beings, created ex nihilo, and

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the infinite being of God; and further to understand the proper "measure" of becoming not as the finitude of form, but as the eternal *epektasis*—the "stretching-out"—of the soul into this infinity. Thus the "rhythm of becoming" is not that of fatedness towards death, but of a perpetual ecstasy towards and into God (not dialectic, as Przywara might say, but analogy). From such metaphysical revolutions would be born, in time's fullness, Thomas' language of the *actus essendi subsistens*.

Professor Barker's understanding of Dionysius the Areopagite is extravagantly inaccurate (would that I had the space to show him).

I am a firm believer in the happy marriage of philosophical and theological truth. Otherwise, I would not see the divorce between them as so ruinously wicked.

And it may be comforting to blame the Reformers for modernity, but voluntarism and nominalism were fruits of late Catholic scholasticism, partly in accord with a venerable tradition in the interpretation of Augustine (curl up some idyllic afternoon with Gottschalk's writings if you doubt it). Nihilism comes of the failure of all Christian culture to live in obedience to grace; all Christians are responsible for it, and for struggling against it.

When to Sustain Life

Wesley J. Smith identifies some worrisome developments in contemporary bioethics, including proposed changes in the legal definition of death ("Waking from the Dead," October 2003). He rightly points out that patients such as Terry Wallis may wake up even after long periods in a persistent vegetative state, although most such patients do not. The persistent vegetative state poses difficult decisions for physicians and families. Many physicians, including many of us who are Christian, feel no such difficulty in generally opposing the use of feeding tubes and intravenous fluids in patients who are terminally ill. It might be unethical to withhold these interventions from terminal patients if they were effective in prolonging life; but they are not effective. Nutrition provided by medical intervention (as opposed to patients eating and drinking what's offered to them) has not been shown to prolong the life of patients in the terminal conditions in which it has been studied, such as end-stage cancer and dementia. And patients in whom we refrain from inserting tubes and needles for food and fluids do not "endure agony."

I would expect a Christian medical ethic to recognize that our life on earth is limited and that at the end of our natural span there might be a time beyond which attempts at further prolongation of life by medical means are likely to increase rather than limit suffering. It is not given to us to take our own lives before their natural end; but what warrant from religion does Mr. Smith have for seeking to delay that end to the uttermost extremity at a time when it must be soon upon us, come what may?

Feeding tubes and IV needles have their uses, but subjecting patients at the end of life to them is simply wrong, except in carefully chosen situations where the chance (no more than a chance) of gaining a short period of time by their use is worth their associated discomforts and possible complications. Physicians who practice among patients with terminal conditions have the experience and perhaps the wisdom to decide when feeding tubes and intravenous fluids ought to be used; just as they make decisions about any other medical intervention. Virtuous physicians who are sensitive to patients and families will make such decisions together with them and will usually do so in harmony. Mr. Smith contrasts the unconditional love of Terry Wallis' family with the sterile intellectualism of bioethics. Medical decisions at the end of life, carefully and prayerfully made together by patient, physician, and family, will reflect unconditional love. Families who are misled by Mr. Smith into demanding supposedly life-prolonging medical interventions when such interventions are more likely to do harm than good will have opted for sterile intellectualism.

Thomas S. Huddle, M.D., Ph.D.
Division of General
Internal Medicine
University of Alabama
at Birmingham

Wesley J. Smith replies:

Dr. Huddle's letter is about oranges when I wrote about apples. My article was primarily concerned with the care and treatment of cognitively disabled patients, the dominant bioethics dogma that such people can be dehumanized and denigrated as "nonpersons," and the consequences that could flow therefrom. I did not write about the treatment of patients who are actively dying.

In his letter, Dr. Huddle quickly affirms my concerns and then quickly pivots to other issues. In doing so, he implies unfairly that I am a vitalist who believes that everything possible should always be done to keep the body functioning, and, indeed, that I advocate such a course to my readers. But there is nothing in my article specifically, or my work generally, to support such a conclusion. Indeed, I am a vocal supporter of hospice and have been a hospice volunteer. The hospice philosophy is explicitly not vitalistic.

I readily acknowledge that if a patient is actively dying and the body is shutting down, providing food and fluids may be *medically* inappropriate. In those circumstances, it should not be provided. That is not the same thing at all as depriving someone of nutrition and hydration or other medical treatment based on a value judgment about the "quality" of their lives. Nor is it the same thing as refus-

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ing wanted life-sustaining treatment based on physicians' values or those of bioethicists as opposed to the beliefs and values of the patient/family, as would occur if futile care theory became standard medical practice.

It is ironic that Dr. Huddle opines that we should leave these decisions to the doctors. But not too long ago that paternalistic attitude often resulted in patients hooked up to machines against their will rather than their being allowed to go home and die natural deaths in their own beds. These abuses led directly to the patients' rights movement, hospice, and the legal requirement that physicians obtain informed consent or informed refusal prior to commencing treatment. Now that the emphasis in health care has reversed from keeping people alive at all costs to increasingly advocating withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining care, it would be utter folly to return to the bad old days where doctors made the decisions instead of patients or families.

It seems to me that a doctor's job in these difficult situations is to tell the patient and family straight-up the expected burdens and potential benefits of the treatment being considered. If the treatment is going to cause suffering, tell the unvarnished truth about its extent and duration.

The doctors should also, of course, make recommendations to patients and obtain second opinions for them. But in the end, value judgments about the quality of life and whether the burdens of staying alive are worth holding back death for a time belong to patients and families—not to a medical system that is growing progressively impersonal, utilitarian, and resource-deprived.

Jewish Orthodoxy Today

Alan Mittleman ("Fretful Orthodoxy," October 2003) states that many Modern Orthodox Jews on college campuses are unsure of what they believe and why, due to a lack of intellectual intensity within the community. "Familism, solidarity, youth groups, institutional loyalties"—in his opinion, and mine, too, often substitute for theological engagement.

I am, however, dubious about several of Professor Mittleman's other observations. He presents Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's mid-nineteenth-century views on Judaism and Western culture as a successful accommodation with modernity in its time. Whatever the merits of Hirsch's theology, it was not really tested until the third generation began to attend university in significant numbers. As an expert on the work of Hirsch's grandson, Isaac Breuer, Prof. Mittleman should know better than most the desperate intellectual debility Breuer diagnosed, and sought to reverse, among his peers a hundred years ago. The state of German Orthodoxy did not improve substantially until the aftermath of World War I brought an influx of old-style Orthodox scholars from Eastern Europe.

Prof. Mittleman laments the passing from the scene of my revered mentor, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, "the Rav" par excellence for American Orthodoxy. Until fairly recently the Rav's major talmudic and theological writings were either unpublished or relatively inaccessible. If our younger generation misses his physical presence, his work is increasingly available, vigorously disseminated by his best students, and quoted and popularized to the point of trivialization. His absence is not the primary factor in the present crisis.

By and large, young Orthodox students are not interested in articulating and defending their beliefs because, like their parents before them, they are preoccupied with their professional training and social lives. Rabbi Soloveitchik used to say that the besetting vice of the middle classes is complacency, and he definitely did not except the community that placed him on a pedestal. With the waning of blatant discrimination in the workplace, and the promise of unlimited acceptance in American society, typified by the "Lieberman moment," one takes it for granted that Orthodoxy can be maintained without the need for extraordinary intellectual heroism or self-sacrifice. Having offered social and intellectual compromises to the Zeitgeist, and relying on the benign live-and-let-live neutrality of the naked academic quad, it comes as an unpleasant surprise when supposedly superficial compromises undermine resoluteness of belief without bridging the gap between Orthodox Judaism and the liberal environment, and when trust in genial tolerance does not confer an exemption from hostile confrontation. One may be dissatisfied with such mediocrity without despising those who are resigned to it.

It has become customary to ascribe all shortcomings of Modern Orthodoxy to the increased influence of so-called "right-wing," traditionalist Orthodoxy. I can't understand how Prof. Mittleman can blame the failure of some Modern Orthodox Jews to know what they believe and why on the encroachments of the "right." If students who gain admittance to, and matriculate at, Ivy League colleges are insufficiently schooled in the challenges posed by contemporary historical scholarship or prevalent ideology, this is not the result of single-minded concentration on the canons of traditional talmudic discourse. If they are tempted by regnant sexual mores, it is probably not for surfeit of full-blooded piety. When a distinguished Modern Orthodox intellectual like David Berger calls for fidelity to fundamental Jewish doctrine on the part of Orthodox rabbis and laymen (as recently discussed in these pages), he is not disparaged by the "right" but by liberal theological voices in the community.

Modern Orthodox spokesmen are rightly disturbed and embarrassed by the inadequacies reported in Prof.

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Mittleman's article. A few decades ago that would not have been the case. Defection on the way to Americanization was common; vitiated practice and invincible vagueness about belief and conviction were not a cause for alarm but the best that could be achieved under unpropitious conditions. If we are disinclined to regard such debility with equanimity, that may be a tribute to the higher standard of commitment associated with the impact of a more strenuous Orthodoxy. From my perspective that is a good thing.

Shalom Carmy
Yeshiva University
New York, New York

Alan Mittleman replies:

I am grateful for the response of Professor Carmy to my article. He speaks as a committed participant in the Orthodox world. I am, at best, a concerned participant-observer. I take it that my analysis is sound, since he seems to agree with my basic point that sociology cannot indefinitely substitute for theology. Intellectual "debility" cannot be accepted with equanimity.

Prof. Carmy does take issue with some of my judgments, such as my affirmation of Samson Raphael Hirsch as a model for cultural engagement. (I have also heard objections to this point from several Orthodox friends.) They are right to point to the fragility of Hirsch's synthesis. A permanent adversarial identity ("sociology") helped to keep Hirsch's intellectual work ("theology") alive. Nonetheless, I would say that an intellectual milieu that was capable of producing such internal critics and continuators as Isaac Breuer did have theological stature.

I suggested in my article, without really developing the point, that "right-wing" Orthodoxy or "fundamentalism" was part of the problem of Modern Orthodoxy's debility. Prof. Carmy objects to this. To state my point more fully here: Ultra-Orthodoxy provides a model for a very strong, Torah-centered Jewish life of indisputable authenticity. It does not require an intellectual engagement with contemporary culture. On the contrary, it shuns such engagement. To the extent that Modern Orthodox youth seek to emulate or embody aspects of Ultra-Orthodoxy, they will also deemphasize the engagement with contemporary culture.

Finally, lest there be any doubt, I am far from "depising" those who are resigned to "mediocrity." I don't think that pious people who do not, for whatever reason, rise to the challenge of theology are mediocre, nor do I despise them. I hope that my article did not imply condescension or contempt. Nothing could be further from my intentions.

War, Peace & Jean Bethke Elshtain: A Continuing Exchange

The unfair—indeed, quite offensive—criticisms lobbed at Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Just War Against Terror* by Stanley Hauerwas and Paul Griffiths ("War, Peace & Jean Bethke Elshtain," October 2003) reminded me of Friedrich Nietzsche's warning in *Ecce Homo* that the more humanitarian our values become, the more monstrous will be world politics. The authors' bizarre lucubrations on her book sounded more like a collaboration between Tertullian and Gore Vidal, with sectarian ecclesiology joining forces with supercilious anti-Americanism, than like an honest confrontation with Professor Elshtain's argument. Although one would never know it from reading their review alone, her book is in fact a careful and painstaking analysis of how classical just war theory must now bring its analytical powers to bear in today's transformed setting of Muslim-motivated murder by terror.

Readers of Prof. Hauerwas' recent Gifford lectures, *With the Grain of the Universe*, are already familiar with his postmortem attempt to read Reinhold Niebuhr out of the Christian fold by the vulgar expedient of declaring him not really a Christian to begin with, a sleight of rhetorical hand uncomfortably reminiscent of the infamous "Cadaver Synod" convened by Pope Stephen VI in 897, when this rancid pope put on trial for heresy the mummified corpse of his predecessor, Pope Formosus, and excommunicated him.

For that reason, I suppose it should come as no surprise that the authors have adopted for their screed the faux-magisterial tone of a privately promulgated *motu proprio*, arrogating to themselves an authority they do not possess—except in their self-anointed role as arbiters of Christian ethics. Hazel Motes, the preacher-protagonist of Flannery O'Connor's novel *Wise Blood*, wanted to start a "Church of Christ Without Christ." To judge by his books, Prof. Hauerwas would seem to prefer a "Church of Christ Without a Church," unless it be perhaps a "Church of One"—with himself as both infallible pontiff and lone communicant.

Readers of this periodical are also already familiar with Prof. Griffiths' earlier criticisms of the American "adventure" (his arch word) in Afghanistan, which resulted in the overthrow of the Taliban regime there (oh, and what a catastrophe *that* was to his hopes for a non-consumerist, abortion-free culture!). So again it comes as no surprise that the authors would sneer, using their collective *soi-créant* magisterial authori-

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ty, at church-state separation and gaze longingly on the mirror-image polity in Muslim nations ruled by *sharia* (Islamic law). Such a topsy-turvy view might make sense inside Professor Hauerwas' idiosyncratic one-man, one-church ecclesiology; but in Mr. Griffiths, a professor of *Catholic* Studies, mind you, such a view beggars the imagination, especially in the wake of *Dignitatis Humanae*, Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom, which explicitly forbids Catholics to countenance state coercion of religious belief. Surely the authors have heard of the two million dead (most of them Christian) in Sudan, the grenades lobbed into a church in Pakistan during worship services one Sunday, the riots against Christians in northern Nigeria because of Christian opposition to the imposition of Islamic law there, the bombing of churches in Indonesia, the beheading of a Christian in Saudi Arabia for converting from Islam to Christianity, and on and on. But then again, Gore Vidal recently said that the fate of Iraqis under Saddam Hussein's Arab-fascist boot was not his concern, so why should the fate of persecuted Christians get in the way of a little America-bashing by these spokesmen for Christian pacifism?

Prof. Elshtain is certainly right that their critique descends into the risible when the authors suggest that the civilized nations send out a posse to arrest Osama bin Laden (with what S.W.A.T. team culled from the Dogberry Constabulary, might one ask—Duke University's campus security patrol?).

But these two magisterial professors move beyond the risible and into the downright morally grotesque when they invidiously contrast our nation's First Amendment freedoms, especially the free exercise of religion (which James Madison called "the luster of our country"), over against the fierce persecution of Christians in Muslim countries. So much for solidarity with the suffering members of the Body of Christ.

For examples of authentic criticism, as opposed to their frivolous carping, one could quite legitimately fear that the Bush Administration's headlong rush into war against Iraq might leave the United States saddled with an American West Bank for the next forty years. One could similarly regard the President's tax cuts as a foolish indulgence at just the time when the government needs money to defend the country. And one can surely recognize that there is an inner sadness, even despair, that drives our consumerist culture and economy at just the time when it is precisely self-sacrifice that we most need.

But to make those concessions would be to start to draw distinctions—precisely what Jean Bethke Elshtain does so masterfully in *Just War Against Terror*. I suspect that is the real reason why Messrs. Hauerwas and Griffiths found her book so offensive to their sensibilities: it challenged them to think outside of their comfortable binary world, a world where morality is an algorithm, the Sermon on the Mount a foreign-policy manual, and moral dilemmas are whisked away with a few slurs on a writer and thinker who can recognize a complex moral problem when she sees one.

Edward T. Oakes, S.J.
University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein Seminary
Mundelein, Illinois

One can only regret that in their assault on Jean Bethke Elshtain, Stanley Hauerwas and Paul Griffiths chose to vent their spleens instead of offering a serious and thoughtful pacifist critique of just war arguments about terror. Had one of my students turned in such a poorly reasoned diatribe, I would have pointed out the fallacies and made him rewrite it.

An example will suffice. According to Messrs. Hauerwas and Griffiths, "[W]hen America sees states organized on principles it doesn't like (this is what Elshtain means by 'failed states') it should remake them by force (if necessary) into states organized on principles it does like." What Elshtain actually says is that when a state is unable or unwilling to undertake the first duty of any state anywhere—to uphold justice—then other states may be justified in intervention. We see then that Hauerwas and Griffiths have translated a claim about justice into a claim about *what some people happen to like*. So far as I can see, there are only two possible justifications for such translation. The first is to maintain that "I like X" is all that anyone ever means by saying "X is just"—in other words, to debunk justice itself. It is hardly imaginable that Hauerwas and Griffiths would take this line, because they would be hoist with their own petard; their arguments against the justice of Elshtain's position would reduce to "We dislike Elshtain's dislike of what we like." The second possibility is to present evidence that Elshtain is lying—that although there is such a thing as justice, she speaks of it only to mislead. Here the problem is that they have no evidence to present; in its place they offer a series of mind-reading exercises like the one at hand: Elshtain is lying. How do we know she is lying? Because she says A when she means B. But how do we know she means B? Because she is lying.

"Either mendacious or culpably blind," thunder Hauerwas and Griffiths; "ideology masquerading as dispassionate analysis." Who is it again that they are shouting about?

J. Budziszewski
Depts. of Government
and Philosophy
The University of Texas at Austin

There was a time when Stanley Hauerwas, carrying on the mission

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and message of his teacher, John Howard Yoder, had to be taken seriously as a Christian moral theologian. The ecclesiology of resident aliens, the narrative ethics of the gospel stories—these were important contributions to Christian moral reflection. One could disagree with the conclusions, but even Hauerwas' violent pacifism and anti-Americanism could be considered and forgiven, along with his charming Texan profanity, as regrettable, even offensive, but still not overly harmful.

That time is past. With the review essay of Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Just War Against Terror*, coauthored with Paul Griffiths, Hauerwas has stepped over the line. It would have been one thing to take on the issues of just war vs. Christian pacifism with this sort of argument: "With Elshtain we agree that world terrorism with its 9/11 declaration of war on the U.S. must be stopped. We also share her passion for the many innocent victims of terrorist regimes such as that of Saddam Hussein. However, since those who live by the sword die by the sword, we believe that Christ calls his disciples to other means by which world terrorism must be stopped and evil regimes such as that of Saddam Hussein must be overthrown. Therefore, much as we share Elshtain's concerns, we cannot agree with her solution. Here is a better way." Just this past weekend I had exactly such a conversation with a prominent Anabaptist ethicist. I disagreed, strongly, but I fully respect and honor both the person and the high moral idealism of the stance taken.

Professors Hauerwas and Griffiths do nothing of the sort. In fact they do not even acknowledge the new post-9/11 reality as the context for Elshtain's book. This results in a grotesque mischaracterization of her position as a mere apology for the Bush Administration's presumed war mongering and imperialism. This distortion and the denial of the war by terror as something to which the American President must respond if he is to be faithful to his oath of office represents a colossal moral failure on Hauerwas' and Griffiths' part. One wants to scream in protest, "Don't you even care about Saddam's victims?"

Their review comes off as yet one more exercise of abstract moral equivalence—"Yes, they are bad guys; but we are just as bad"—that has become the common parlance of the anti-American left. This is not innocent; it is not harmless. It has its parallels with the moral equivalency appeasers of fascism and communism in the previous century. The end results are similar. Terror goes unchallenged; human lives are sacrificed on the altar of political ideology and partisanship.

What is so galling about this is that Elshtain painstakingly points out that the reason America is hated by the terrorists who struck the World Trade Center on 9/11 is no secret requiring deft sociology-of-knowledge speculation about elaborate schemes of victimization. They have told us very clearly. Furthermore, for Hauerwas and Griffiths to ignore the careful self-critical discussion in Elshtain's book on the criteria for American conduct, appealing to the highest moral standards of the nation's own laws and spiritual resources, is itself scandalously immoral.

In this review, Prof. Hauerwas leaves the community of civil, respectful discourse, not to mention the community of Christian discourse, and becomes a mere mouthpiece of the ideological left, a careless spewer of hateful rhetoric. I for one am terribly saddened; I can no longer take Hauerwas seriously as a responsible moral theologian. He is of course free to hold and express his political views. All I ask, Stanley, is that you please stop invoking the name of Jesus in connection with your political ideology and opinion. To suggest that this is the sort of thing that must characterize Jesus' counter-polis of peace and shalom in a world of violence and hate is to mock us and mock our Lord.

John Bolt
Professor of Systematic Theology
Calvin Theological Seminary
Grand Rapids, Michigan

I turned with interest and what I hope is an open mind to the "exchange" between Jean Bethke Elshtain and Messrs. Stanley Hauerwas and Paul Griffiths on the subject of Elshtain's new book, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*. I simply wanted to read an intelligent analysis of the arguments for or against the current administration's "war on terrorism." But quickly, I was put off by the shallow America-bashing and the strident, condescending tone of the Hauerwas/Griffiths piece. Toward the end of their analysis, these gentlemen opine that the work is "not a book whose argument should convince anyone thoughtful." Thoughtless me, but I must confess I was far more convinced by Ms. Elshtain's multi-layered, clear, and cogent arguments than by the distressingly clichéd anti-American animus of Messrs. Hauerwas and Griffiths. Although they make some substantive points, their glaring disregard of human rights abuses except those committed in America or by Americans betrays a far greater degree of ideology and bias than anything that Elshtain had to say in her own response. If this exchange is any indication of Elshtain's grasp of history, her moral clarity, and her sharp logic, I look forward to reading her book.

Leah Lebec
East Hampton, New York

In response to Jean Bethke Elshtain I would like to dispute the viability of

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her acceptance of John Paul II's thoughtful contention that "democratic civil society is the political form that best speaks to the dignity of the human person." While it can be argued that a defensible constitutional democracy should be marked by common respect for rights as a normative goal, numerous public choice scholars have convincingly (I think) demonstrated that democratic civil society has often metamorphosed into a form of majoritarianism that endures as an instrument of plunder. Consistent with that view, numerous liberal theorists have suggested that liberalism (within the context of western democracies) should be seen as a vehicle that constructs people for the benefit of the state, not the state for the benefit of people. It is surely possible that such a society is profoundly inhospitable to human dignity, which respects freedom of conscience and the freedom to manifest unpopular but deeply held beliefs.

I would also dispute Professor Elshtain's claim that the American story is one in which dissidents use principles embedded in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to fight unjust practices. Doubtless those claims were true of Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, et al. But in our postmodern age those principles have become increasingly malleable in the hands of individuals and groups committed to their view of human progress. Such malleability distances us from any consensus on the meaning and content of embedded principles. Moreover, an examination of America's history reveals numerous examples of resorts to embedded principles as a way of expanding *injustice*. The asserted separation of church and state, for example, has been used to entrench anti-Catholic and anti-Irish bigotry in an effort to prevent Catholic schools from receiving state funding. Taken together, the historical record and the advent of postmodern hermeneutics inescapably imply that "embedded principles" can constitute grounds for reifying (as well as fighting) unjust practices.

Harry G. Hutchinson
Professor of Law
and Director of Graduate Studies
Wayne State University Law School
Detroit, Michigan

It was with dismay and regret that I read Stanley Hauerwas' and Paul Griffiths' response to Jean Bethke Elshtain's book. I see no careful and critical thought in their rather knee-jerk response to the use of justified force. They couch their argument against Elshtain conveniently in "America as empire" terms; but while this tactic contains a smidgeon of truth, it remains just that—a paltry excuse for the failure (unwillingness?) to contend with the history of Christian moral thought. One wishes for more than overblown rhetoric ("this new imperialism"; "nothing more than window-dressing for a passion to impose America upon the world") to undergird the authors' radical critique of "Constantinianism." Their approach fails to engage the width and breadth of the Christian moral tradition. One wishes for a critique of governing authorities that is not merely stuck in apocalyptic analysis. Clearly, for Hauerwas and Griffiths, matters of public policy are not worthy of serious Christian moral critique; they engage instead in a series of snide comments regarding America as empire and Christians who disagree with them as stooges of the current administration.

When the authors complain that in order to assume America's presumed duty to the world "thirty or so invasions and nation-buildings on the Iraqi model would be immediately required," they are blowing smoke. The problem is not *thirty*; rather it is that the "nonviolent" position fails to wrestle with the policy complexities of *any one* dilemma. Hauerwas and Griffiths cannot link just war principles to any situation in history. For to do so would be to expose the retreatist foundation of their argument: "Let the world do the dirty business of defending its borders and dealing with criminal behavior; meanwhile, let's build radical Christian communities and be prophetic."

Further, it is utterly presumptuous—and false—to insinuate, as the authors do, that Paul Ramsey would oppose a war on terrorism. In fact, Ramsey's position is easy to tease out from his writings. On justifying force, he cites the Good Samaritan as a model of Christian charity by posing the intriguing question: "What if the Good Samaritan were to happen upon the crime itself while it was being committed?" Would nonviolence be the best response? No, argues Ramsey—and here he sides with St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, for whom *self-defense* was immoral—that it is the very nature of Christian charity to *protect the innocent third party* by rendering incapacitated the offender, using proportionate means. When the authors suggest that nonviolence is the authentic way of expressing Christian faith, they avoid the ugly truth that nonviolence sometimes may be an immoral response to social evil. There is a "peace" that is immoral. For my part, I would rather be an innocent third party in Elshtain's world than in that of Hauerwas and Griffiths.

J. Daryl Charles
Visiting Fellow
Baylor University Institute for Faith
& Learning
Waco, Texas

With respect to the attack by Stanley Hauwerwas and Paul Griffiths on Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Just War on Terror*, I have to say that it is an entirely unfair critique that fails to meet the most essential criteria of hermeneutical charity—the criteria of close reading and fair representation.

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Professor Elshtain has ably responded to Hauerwas' and Griffiths' specific criticisms, and I would like to reinforce aspects of that response. First, Hauerwas and Griffiths claim with respect to the naturalistic fallacy that Elshtain wants to have her cake and eat it too. They cite, as evidence of Elshtain's approval of fact/value dichotomy, her claim that "there is no substitute for the facts. If we get our descriptions of events wrong, our analyses and our ethics will be wrong." While this quote does affirm a relative distinction between fact and value, it certainly does not affirm an absolute distinction. In fact, by claiming a tight correlation between description and evaluation, and the necessity of thinking them through together, Elshtain presents a realist position acknowledging the inevitability of reciprocal influence. Far from being a rhetorical ploy to convince readers of her moral pellucidity, and far from being an underhanded strategy to ascribe to her descriptions more moral gravity than they deserve, such a claim reflects clarity of thought and utmost care in the effort correctly to name things and to provide a basis for reflexive critique of one's own and others' false namings.

Second, in their effort to reveal the supposedly ideological masquerade of Elshtain's thought, Hauerwas and Griffiths claim that "her values are almost entirely in accord with those of the Bush Administration's National Security Strategy." This seems to me to verge on libel. In a recent interview in the journal *Books & Culture*, for instance, Elshtain claims that affirming the justifiability of war in Iraq, according to the criteria of the just war tradition, requires that the actual prosecution of the war and the future activity of the U.S. in Iraq be under constant review. She hints, I believe, at the possibility that there may be significant reasons for critique of the Bush policy as it has actually played out since the formal declaration of the war's end in May.

Thirdly, Hauerwas and Griffiths write that Elshtain's views on the burdens of U.S. power amount to a foreign policy in which the U.S. will attempt to make over every other state that is not organized by "principles it doesn't like" according to "principles it does like." Again, libel. Elsthain goes to great lengths in this book and elsewhere reasonably to defend the moral superiority of democratic values on the grounds that those values reflect, better than other systems of governance, the dignity and equality of all individuals.

Lastly, Hauerwas and Griffiths charge Elshtain with lack of insight with respect to her use of the just war tradition in critical thinking about the war on terrorism. In fact, in the spirit of Augustine and Aquinas, who devoted their intellectual and spiritual gifts to discerning and articulating the relevance of the life of faith and the Christian tradition within the crush of this-worldly experience, Elshtain has committed her career and person to being a public Christian intellectual. As such, she seems to me to have deliberated honorably and faithfully, more so than many others writing on the contemporary scene, over how the resources of the Christian tradition, and the tradition of just war specifically, can speak to both the horror and promise of our present moment.

Michael Kraftson-Hogue
Chicago, Illinois

One of my favorite aspects of FIRST THINGS is the thoughtful exploration of ideas and frank exchange of opinion. In "War, Peace & Jean Bethke Elshtain," Stanley Hauerwas and Paul Griffiths deviate from the normally respectful challenge of others' views by indulging in character assassination.

As I read their article I was stunned by the multiple occasions of personal attack ("Such a depiction is either mendacious or culpably blind") in the place of argument.

I also found two other characteristics of this article troubling: first, the assumption that American values are not to be admired but treated as pathologies, and second, that only unthinking readers would be convinced by Elshtain's book. This reveals more about Hauerwas and Griffiths than about the book they were reviewing.

Mark Pike
Campus Minister
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

The Stanley Hauerwas/Paul Griffiths "review" of Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Just War on Terror* is one of the most appalling hatchet pieces I have ever read. In particular, the ideological equation of Elshtain and Osama bin Laden is repugnant. Fortunately, Elshtain acquits herself admirably well in her own defense.

All I can say is thank God Hauerwas is a pacifist and not a military officer. His "take no prisoners" recklessness is a lot less dangerous in his ivory tower than it would be on a battlefield.

Bob Morrison
Arlington, Massachusetts

Paul Griffiths replies:
Well, it seems that Stanley Hauerwas and I touched some nerves and provoked some rhetoric whose elevation exceeds even that of our own. Is that a good thing? It's hard to say. The intensity of the responses shows at least that some (like me) find this issue fundamentally important, which is good. But many of the letter writers were hard pressed to find evidence of thought or argument in our response to Ms. Elshtain; and I too find it difficult to find evidence of either in most of the letters. This shows, no doubt, a failure of communication on both sides, which is not so good. Perhaps I can improve things.

Many of the writers object to the polemical rhetoric of our piece. This

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is a difficult one. I like pointed, direct, and colorful argument, especially when we're blessed with an instrument as rich in polemical vocabulary as the English language. But I also acknowledge that many don't, that sensibilities differ. I am sorry for offense caused to those with tender sensibilities. However, those who use the elevated rhetoric of insult themselves (Edward T. Oakes, John Bolt) seem hardly in a good position to criticize others for using it. Myself, I wish that we could recover the argumentative habits of the eighteenth century and the fourth: Is there any jolt of intellectual pleasure in today's anodyne public prose to rival that of Gibbon's footnotes on Augustine in the *Decline and Fall* or Augustine's excoriations of Donatists and Pelagians? The issues on which we engaged Ms. Elshtain matter deeply; we should argue about them as though they did.

Some (Mr. Bolt, Ms. Lebec, Father Oakes, et al.) want to know whether we *care* about those murdered en masse by dictators. I do. As all Christians must. But our first duty as Christians is to mourn and lament such deaths, not to use violence in response to them. It should be obvious that caring for the innocent sufferers of oppression does not by itself entail supporting the use of military force to remove their oppressors. Prudence and careful thought should intervene between the one and the other. My disagreement with Ms. Elshtain was (in part) over whether enough prudence and thought had been exercised. It's hard to see much acknowledgment of this need for prudence and careful thought in those who accuse us of lacking compassion just because we don't advocate or support particular military interventions.

Mr. Pike, Fr. Oakes, and others want to know whether I think all American values pathological. No. But I do think pathological the American realities mentioned in the original response: unrestricted abortion; more than one percent of the population in prison; inequalities between rich and poor now rivalling those of the (last) Gilded Age; rampant consumerist individualism; and so on. Is it relevant to pay attention to these pathologies when we're using military force to export what we are? Yes, without a doubt. It's surprising that FIRST THINGS readers, especially, should need reminding of this. Hasn't this journal devoted much intellectual energy to exploring just these pathologies?

Mr. Kraftson-Hogue doubts that Ms. Elshtain's commitments with respect to the strategy informing U.S. foreign policy are almost entirely in accord with those of this administration's National Security Strategy. Well, yes, they are: the example Mr. Kraftson-Hogue cites shows only that there may well be disagreements between the Bush Administration and Ms. Elshtain on points of policy implementation. But, of course, the National Security Strategy is precisely that—a *strategy*, not a series of recommendations as to particular policies, much less as to the implementations of such policies. It is at the level of strategy that Ms. Elshtain's views are fundamentally identical with those of the Bush Administration. I ask Mr. Kraftson-Hogue to read *The National Security Strategy of the USA* (2002) together with Ms. Elshtain's book, and then to ask himself whether our original claim is correct.

Mr. Charles and others want to know whether we're interested in serious Christian moral analysis and critique of particular public policy questions. Yes, I am. That's what I was offering and what I think Ms. Elshtain was not offering. Serious Christian moral analysis requires that the first point of reference be the Church and the first question be, What should the Body of Christ do in this situation? Any other procedure tends toward idolatry of the state, something to which a majority of the letters seem sadly subject.

A number of the letters seem to think that the position Mr. Hauerwas and I argued requires pacifism. But it doesn't. I am not a pacifist—on this Mr. Hauerwas and I differ. I do not, however, think that I had sufficient reason to judge the *ius ad bellum* criteria satisfied in the case of Afghanistan or Iraq (for an argument to this effect see my essay in FT, April 2002, an argument that subsequent events and discussion have given me no cause to withdraw or modify). I am far from alone in so thinking.

Mr. Bolt, Fr. Oakes, and others suggest that our piece implies moral equivalence between the United States and the Taliban's Afghanistan or Hussein's Iraq. But it doesn't. The truth is more complicated and interesting. In some respects the U.S. is much better than those states, and in some much worse. And since the two cases differ one from another, the respects in question also differ. To think that there are only two possibilities—moral equivalence or clear U.S. superiority in all significant respects—is, well, lacking in nuance.

Mr. Budziszewski at least offers an argument. Unfortunately, it's not a very good one. He claims that we misrepresent Ms. Elshtain by transforming her claims about justice into claims about preference. But this is not so. The relevant opposition is between rival understandings of justice (*sharia* vs. U.S. democratic constitutionalism, let's say). Ms. Elshtain's formulation (injustice vs. justice) obscured this, and we put things as we did in order pointedly to reveal the obscurantism. A tad subtle, perhaps, but there it is. To say that a *sharia*-ordered polity is unjust ("failed") because it's not much like a democratic polity qualifies only as exclusion-by-stipulative-definition. Not a very respectable tactic for a philosopher.

Fr. Oakes' style really has gotten

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the better of him. I recommend a good dose of George Orwell's prose and a cold compress for his fevered brow. He thinks I can't recognize a complex moral problem; I think he'd have trouble telling a hawk from a handsaw even when the desert winds blow around Baghdad. He certainly seems to have forgotten that the Church flourishes under persecution, and that it is, to put it mildly, not obvious that life in the U.S. is better for the Church than life in the Soviet Union, the Taliban's Afghanistan, or Baathist Iraq.

A point that informs much of this debate is the significance given to the United States. The truth is that America is neither as interesting nor as important as most contributors to the debate seem to think. American Christians would do well to think first about being Christians and only then—a very long way behind—about being Americans. That it seems shockingly sectarian to say so only shows how deeply the fascination of the U.S. has entered into the Christian soul.

I'm grateful to Ms. Elshtain for prompting this discussion, to FIRST THINGS for permitting it, and to those who have taken the time to write letters for furthering it. I've found it instructive, and I'm especially thankful that the editors of FIRST THINGS find it possible and (I hope) useful to permit such a debate to take place in their pages. Such a thing is rare in these times of hardened positions and sloganeering as a substitute for thought.

Stanley Hauerwas replies:
In *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*, Jean Bethke Elshtain wrote in support of the foreign policy of the Bush Administration after September 11, 2001. Paul Griffiths and I responded in kind; that is, we challenged sharply the assumption that the descriptions constituent of the Bush Administration's foreign policy should be accepted as a given. Perhaps some of the sentences in our review were "too sharp," but if they were it's only because we hold Jean Elshtain in such high regard and we were disappointed that her book did not at least raise some of the fundamental questions we think need to be raised about the justice of the war on terrorism.

For example, Mr. Kraftson-Hogue rightly says that the position of *Just War Against Terror* is a realist position. But surely there are tensions between just war reflection and political realism. One would have liked to have seen Professor Elshtain explore some of those difficulties. The issue can be put very simply, as Mr. Charles suggests, in terms of Paul Ramsey's work.

Ramsey tried to save Reinhold Niebuhr's realism by employing just war reflection (this is the primary project of Ramsey's *The Just War*, which has happily just been republished with a foreword by me). It is still an open question whether Ramsey's project was a success. If, as Ramsey argued, just war is the form charity takes to permit coercion, then Niebuhr's resort to a lesser of two evils argument to justify war cannot be consistent with just war reflection.

Accordingly, we would have welcomed Prof. Elshtain's reflections on why she assumes the description "war on terror" is one consistent with a just war logic. Who is the enemy? Under what conditions do they know they can surrender? Why should the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq be understood as a continuation of a war on terror? Those are the kinds of questions we would have liked to have seen Prof. Elshtain explore rather than simply assuming the description "war on terror" makes sense. Those who came to Jean Elshtain's defense rightly admire her. We also admire her, but we think she's deeply mistaken in her understanding of how just war reflection should discipline the American war on terror.

Jean Bethke Elshtain replies:
I am more grateful than I can say to those letter writers who recognized the cruel, even slanderous, nature of the Hauerwas/Griffiths collaboration. To say that I was shocked when I received their "review" is to understate the matter. I don't understand the viciousness of the "pacifist" temperament in practice—at least in this instance. I quite agree that we should all be grateful that neither Griffiths nor Hauerwas are military men if this example is characteristic of their approach to enemies—as I have clearly become by their own reckoning. At least just war lays down rules of restraint. Apparently when one has anointed oneself arbiter of who is and who is not really Christian, no restraint need apply. The Hauerwas/Griffiths collaboration reminds me of nothing so much as the violent ideologies of no restraint characteristic of so many self-styled revolutionary movements historically—the "if you want to make an omelet, you've got to break eggs" mode of arguing.

As to the remarks of Harry Hutchinson: I suggest that Professor Hutchinson come down from the high ground of theory to the ground of everyday life. With the number of mass graves uncovered in Iraq now up to 262, it seems rather clear what a state that assaults human dignity in the most violent ways looks like. As a member of the Board of Directors of the National Endowment for Democracy, I am regularly horrified at the systematic policies of rape, violence against political and religious opponents, and other egregious actions carried out in so many places on our fragile globe. My many contacts in other societies are perplexed (to put it mildly) by American theorists who condemn American society as lacking in "freedom of conscience and the freedom to manifest unpopular but deeply held beliefs."

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What society might this be? Those who came out of the underground movements in Eastern Europe understand. Those who fought apartheid and paid with prison sentences, or worse, understand. Those standing up to policies of rape and the use of child soldiers for capricious killings in Sudan and Congo understand. To depict American society in this way—whatever the "public choice" theorists are writing—is ludicrous. Sometimes it seems as if the freedom to "manifest unpopular but deeply held beliefs" is equated to such beliefs triumphing. But freedom doesn't work like that. You can manifest your beliefs but you cannot guarantee that others will agree.

On the point of using principles "embedded" in our Declaration and Constitution to spearhead dissent—it was precisely the Frederick Douglasses, Martin Luther Kings, and Elizabeth Cady Stantons I had in mind. I admit that I do not quite understand where Professor Hutchinson is driving with the rest of his comments. That bigots historically have tried to manipulate "embedded principles" in order to justify their bigotry goes without saying. Fortunately, they can be, and have been, opposed by those who point out the ways in which they are distorting such principles. Surely Prof. Hutchinson doesn't believe we would be better off without those principles. One uses the principles—such as free exercise—against those who push nonestablishment so far that it erodes free exercise. I shudder to think what a fight against unjust practices would look like in the absence of normative principles. Perhaps Prof. Hutchinson believes a "postmodern hermeneutics" that pulls the rug out from under "embedded practices" is a better route for the defense against unjust practices. If so, we should be told what such a politics would look like in practice. I suspect it would be one in which the unpopular ideas, with no principles to repair to in order to prick people's consciences and remind them of the "better angels of their nature," were trounced completely, as well as one in which the most ruthless triumphed and in which the still, small voice of reason was silenced altogether.

George Lindbeck Replies to Avery Cardinal Dulles

In reviewing *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (October 2003), Avery Cardinal Dulles focuses on what he calls the "Lindbeck project"—put forward most fully in *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984)—taken as a whole rather than on the particularities of the book itself. This is all to the good as far as I am concerned, for I have long been waiting for him to put his comprehensive assessment of the project into print. The review reads like a request for a public response, and for that I am grateful.

Before responding, however, I should mention that James Buckley, the editor of *The Church in a Postliberal Age* and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of Loyola in Maryland, is in effect a coauthor of the book. He has woven those of my shorter writings he selected out of many into a remarkably unified whole by means of extensive interpretive comments. He did this work without any input from me: I did not even know which writings and organizing themes he had chosen until the page proofs arrived. To my shame, however, I never read them, and thus it is I who am responsible for the editorial failures Cardinal Dulles cites. The most egregious, the failure to correct the consistent omission of *fide* from *sola fide Christi* in an article of that title, happened long before Buckley's watch when I condensed and rewrote an essay which I first published, as a footnote indicates, in a German version (which, not surprisingly, is free of this error). Cardinal Dulles does not blame anyone by name, but it should be made clear that it is I, not Buckley, who am at fault.

Turning now to my reply to Cardinal Dulles, I shall, except for thanking him, bypass the "many aspects of the Lindbeck project" about which he says he is "enthusiastic."

What Cardinal Dulles criticizes is not so much my cultural-linguistic view of religion as the associated regulative (or "grammatical") understanding of church doctrines (or "dogmas," in Roman Catholic usage). He thinks that my stress on their intrasystematically regulative role makes it doubtful that they also function propositionally; or, in more conventional terms, he suggusts that the emphasis I place on truth as coherence with other beliefs obscures the primacy of truth understood as correspondence to objective reality. He concludes that "Lindbeck's own program concedes too much to postmodern relativism." This indictment, I shall argue, is a mistake, but as I am in part responsible for the misunderstandings which occasioned it, I shall not blame the Cardinal, but simply seek to clarify the confusions that have led him astray.

As I have already indicated, Cardinal Dulles suggests that the chief reason for what he regards as my relativism is that "for Lindbeck, the truth of Christianity . . . is predominantly intrasystemic." He then goes on to say, as if this were a conse-

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quence, that "[Lindbeck] refrains from saying that God is in Himself triune or that the Son of God is really a divine person." This apparent implication is, I suspect, stronger than he intends. We know each other well enough so that I do not take him to imply that I have mental reservations about these affirmations when I recite the Nicene Creed on Sunday or defend Chalcedon against its detractors. Rather, the fault with which I am charged, as I interpret it, is that my project either appears or is relativistic despite my intentions to the contrary. Cardinal Dulles writes in reference to my treatment of "the missionary enterprise" that "the rhetoric of Lindbeck, if not his actual thought, seems to undercut" what I want to say. Most of his criticisms seem to reflect a similar doubt as to whether the problem is with my "rhetoric" or with my "actual thought" (i.e., theories), but their cumulative effect leans towards the latter.

Thus, to illustrate, Cardinal Dulles appears to think that I doubt the following: "In agreement with Lindbeck's editor, I [Dulles] do not see the cultural-linguistic approach as antithetical to the propositional. If we are to worship, speak, and behave as if the Son of God were himself God (as Lindbeck rightly affirms), is it not because the Son really and ontologically is God, whether anyone believes it or not? By inserting the *homoousion* in the creed, the Council of Nicaea was indeed laying down a linguistic stipulation; but more importantly, it was declaring an objective truth." Moreover, Cardinal Dulles seems to suspect, though he does not assert, that I neglect the point Polanyi argues against Wittgenstein "that we cannot intelligently debate about linguistic rules unless we are conjointly aware of the subject matter to which the words refer. To substitute grammatical debates for debates about the things meant is to obfuscate the necessary connection between meaningful language and reality." From this obfuscation it follows, Cardinal Dulles concludes, that "Lindbeck seriously undermines, if he does not dismiss, the propositional truth of dogma." This he apparently equates with the propositional truth of Christianity. I take this to be the core of the complaint that Lindbeck "concedes too much to postmodern relativism."

Given the conventions governing book reviews, Cardinal Dulles is precluded from citing chapter and verse in support of this indictment, but I shall try to fill this gap by discussing three difficulties that have led many readers to conclude, as he does, that I undercut "the propositional truth" of the faith. The first difficulty attaches to the self-involving character I attribute to religious truth claims in general and Christian ones in particular. This, to be sure, is not a problem for Cardinal Dulles, though it is for many others, but why this is so needs explanation. He is not among those who find the virus of relativism in my contention in *The Nature of Doctrine* that a sentence such as "Christ is Lord" becomes a "first-order proposition" capable of "making ontological truth claims only as it is used in the activities of adoration, proclamation, obedience, promise-hearing and promise-keeping which shape individuals and communities into conformity to the mind of Christ." To deny this contention is to suppose that those whose assent to the truths of the faith is, in Newman's sense, purely notional and not at all real are nevertheless uttering first-order propositions, truth claims about the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, when they recite the creed. Such a supposition implies, in turn, that propositions are verbal formulae or, perhaps, Platonic ideas rather than, first of all, beliefs, judgments, acts of the intellect, as medieval Aristotelians and many modern thinkers maintain. Cardinal Dulles like myself, if I understand him rightly, is on the side of the medievals supplemented by Newman in reference to the sentence just quoted. If so, however, I find it puzzling that he doubts that I, like him, "do not see the cultural-linguistic [regulative] approach as antithetical to the propositional." Why does he not take at face value my claim that the version of the regulative approach to doctrine which I utilize is compatible with "the modest cognitivism or propositionalism represented by at least some classical theorists, of whom Aquinas is a good example"?

The answer to this question appears to lie in a second source of difficulties, my rhetorically motivated but also, as time has shown, conceptually confusing tripartite division of truth. Cardinal Dulles is one of many who have been misled, and so I shall here simply summarize a mea culpa and a clarification first published fifteen years ago (see my "Response to Bruce Marshall," *The Thomist* 53 [1989] 403-6). I there agree that it is confusing to speak, as I do in *The Nature of Doctrine*, of three kinds of "truth": categorical, intrasystematic (coherentist), and ontological (correspondence). This trichotomy can be innocently employed. It does no harm and may be helpful sometimes to speak of two other kinds of "truth," categorical and intrasystematic, that are necessary in order rightly to affirm the ontological truth of, for example, *Christus est Dominus*. First, in the absence of appropriate categories and concepts, Christ's Lordship is misconstrued. That Lordship is unlike any other: it involves, most astonishingly, the suffering servanthood of One who is God. Unless this is in some measure understood, "Christ is Lord" is false: it predicates the wrong Lordship of Jesus Christ. Nor does this proposition correspond to the reality affirmed by faith unless it is also, in the second place,

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intrasystematically "true," that is, coheres and is consistent with the whole network of Christian beliefs and practices. In the light of these clarifications, the tripartite division of "truth" implies neither relativism nor lack of objectivity.

Yet even if the trichotomy is in some circumstances harmless or perhaps even helpful, it is also dangerously confusing. Categorical adequacy and intrasystematic coherence are "truth" only equivocally. Properly speaking, they are necessary though not sufficient conditions for truth in the third (but primary) sense of correspondence. My original discussion of the matter refers in passing to the distinction between conditions for truth and truth itself, and is thus technically free of error. But the references are tangential and fail entirely to advert to the related and decisive distinction between the justification of belief (for which categorical and intrasystematic "truth" are conditions) and the truth of belief (which is a matter of correspondence). Because of these deficiencies, it has been easy to suppose that the second, intrasystematic kind of "truth" is an alternative to rather than a condition for propositional or ontological truth. When this happens, readers falsely conclude—with delight in the case of postmodern relativists, but, more to my liking, with sadness in the case of Cardinal Dulles—that "for Lindbeck, the truth of Christianity . . . is predominantly intrasystemic." A corrected formulation, in contrast, simply notes that special attention to the intrasystematic (and categorical) *conditions* for affirming ontological *truth* is inseparable from a cultural-linguistic perspective on a religion such as Christianity. It most emphatically does not imply that the realities which faith affirms and trusts are in the slightest degree intrasystematic. They are not dependent on the performative faith of believers (as if, for example, Christ rose from the dead only in the faith of the Church), but are objectively independent.

The remaining and third difficulty is definitional. To define official church doctrine, as I do, in terms of its intrasystematically regulative functions is to exclude ontologically propositional uses. Thus instead of saying that the Lindbeck project "seriously undermines . . . the [ontologically] propositional truth of dogma," Cardinal Dulles could have gone further and said that the project by definition entirely strips dogma of such truth. The insertion of "by definition," however, provides an escape for him as well as for me. He could have added, if he was so inclined, that stripping dogmas of ontological reference by definition relocates rather than abolishes affirmations of the propositional truth of the faith. These affirmations are not to be looked for in the regulative, dogmatic uses of the Nicene Creed, for example, but rather in its more basic use as the Church's liturgically central and communally and individually self-involving confession of faith. The ontological truth claims of the creedal confession of faith remain existentially foundational and are also chronologically prior to its becoming dogma in 325 and 381.

This makes it possible to agree with the substance of Cardinal Dulles' statement that "[b]y inserting the *homoousion* in the creed, the Council of Nicaea was indeed laying down a linguistic stipulation; but more importantly, it was declaring an objective truth." Formally, however, it would be better to say from a doctrine-as-regulative perspective that the linguistic stipulation *protected* (not "declared") objectively true affirmations. This is not an unprecedented suggestion. Newman among others can be invoked in favor of this regulative rather than declaratory role of official doctrine. As I read him, he includes the insertion of the *homoousion* in the creed among those "exercises of reasoning [which] indeed do but increase and harmonize our notional apprehension of the dogma" but add little to our real assent, "and if they are necessary, as they certainly are, they are necessary not so much for faith as against unbelief."

One final comment: Cardinal Dulles infers that I am "postmodern" chiefly from my use of Wittgenstein and Geertz. That use, however, was heuristic rather than probative and could be entirely omitted without materially affecting my argument. The influence of John Henry Newman has been considerably greater although I rarely mention him: he is not a favorite among the postmoderns whom I am also, I admit, trying to address. In the secondary literature, furthermore, the legitimacy of my reliance on Thomas Aquinas has been much more discussed than has my relation to any modern, much less postmodern, author. On that point as well as many others I treasure Cardinal Dulles' opinion, but I hope he will be able to agree that at least "postmodern" and "relativist" can be dropped from his list of criticisms.

Avery Cardinal Dulles replies:
At the end of my review I expressed the hope that George Lindbeck could amend his cultural-linguistic theory to give greater attention to the capacity of religious language to disclose the reality of God. I am gratified to find that in his response he shows a great willingness to move in this direction without forfeiting the strengths of his present position.

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Opinion

Confessions of a Christian Historian

John Witte, Jr.

"History is God's theatre, . . . God's jousting place."
Martin Luther

In the spring of 1995, I visited the great Saxon capital of Dresden. I stood on the banks of the Elbe River at the site of the Frauenkirche—the monumental domed church, consecrated in 1734, graced by one of Johann Sebastian Bach's greatest organ concerts in 1736, and celebrated in German music, art, and literature ever since.

It was a sobering moment. For the great church lay in ruins. A guide explained that the church did not survive the fire bombing of Dresden near the end of World War II. On February 13-14, 1945, 773 Allied bombers emptied their payloads on Dresden. No bombs hit the church directly. But the fires were enough. First the art, the woodwork, the pulpit, the organ, and the altars were consumed. As the fires penetrated more deeply, scores of people hidden in the church's catacombs were burned to death. Eventually, the intense heat of the fires weakened the church so much that it simply collapsed under its own weight. Large chunks of the dome, charred and cracked, still lay where they had fallen some fifty years before. A large piece of the steeple still protruded from the ground at a grim angle. Only one wall of the nave still stood, its top jagged and pocked where the roof had torn away.

It was also an exhilarating moment. For stretching out from the wall of the nave in all directions were hundreds of rows of scaffolds, where workers were storing the ten thousand–odd pieces of stone that had been collected from the rubble of the fallen church. The Frauenkirche, the guide informed me, would be reconstructed, using as many of the original stones as possible. A giant blueprint assigned each of the recovered stones to its original place in the structure. New stones were being collected from the same quarry that had been mined for the original construction. A massive outpouring of charity had made this reconstruction possible.

I have often given thanks for that brief moment on the banks of the Elbe. For this small frame captured several themes that are at the center of my life—as a Christian believer and as a legal historian.

The story of the Dresden church is a metaphor of life. Construction, destruction, and reconstruction. Work, judgment, and purgation. Birth, death, and resurrection. Creation, fall, and redemption. These are the stages of life. These are the passages of faith. The old must pass away so that the new may come forth. We must die so that we can be reborn. Our bodies must be buried so that they can be resurrected. Our works must be burned so that they can be purified. Our bonds must be broken so that we can be reconciled. This is the nature of biblical religion. It gives life its power. It gives pain its purpose. It gives time its pattern.

These basic biblical themes—that time has a pattern, that history has a purpose, that life has an end of reconciliation—inform my understanding of history. The Bible teaches that time is linear, not cyclical. Biblical history moves forward from a sin-trampled garden to a golden city, from a fallen world to a perfect end time. Our lives as Christians move, circuitously but inevitably, toward a reconciliation with God, neighbor, and self—if not in this life, then in the life to come.

Human history cannot be fully understood without reference to this divine mystery. God is beyond time, yet has chosen to reveal a part of Himself within it. Through the creation and incarnation, God pours out a measure of His being and grace. Through the law and gospel, God sets forth a measure of His word and will. Through miracles and messengers, God puts forth a measure of divine power and judgment. All of history, in Martin Luther's words, is "a demonstration, recollection, and sign of divine action and judgment, how God upholds, rules, obstructs, rewards, punishes, and honors the world, especially the human world." We are within time, yet we are able in part to transcend it. Through our conscience and imagination, we gradually discover something of the meaning of God's plan for each creature. Through our creativity and experimentation, we slowly uncover something of the majesty of God's plan for the creation. Through our liturgies and epiphanies, we slowly uncover something of the mystery of God's incarnation for the Church. Through our texts and traditions, we gradually accumulate something of the wisdom of God's revelation for all people.

To be sure, God's plan and our history are not identical. God's plan consists of much more than what God chooses to reveal to us or what we are able to dis-

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cern of it. Much of what we see appears to be the work of a concealed God, even at times a seemingly capricious God. In Luther's colorful image, history is "God's mummery and mystery," "God's joust and tourney." History is "God's theatre," in which the play cannot be fully understood until it ends and until we exit. To equate one act or actor, one speech or text with the divine play itself is to cast a partial and premature judgment. To insist on one interpretation of the play before it ends is to presume the power of eternal discernment. To judge the play on the basis of a few episodes is to insult the genius of the divine playwright.

Human history, in turn, consists of much more than our conscientious struggle to follow God's word and will in our lives, to reflect God's image and immanence in our world. Much of what we see in our personal lives is the "war between our members," the struggle between the carnal and the spiritual, the sinner and the saint. Much of what we see in our collective lives is the sinful and savage excesses of corrupt creatures, the diverse and perverse choices of free human agents. But there is simply too much order in our world, too much constancy in our habits, too much justice in our norms for us to think that the course of human events is not somehow channeled by God's providential plan.

God is thus both revealed and concealed in history. "All events," as John Calvin put it, "are governed by God's secret plan." If God were completely revealed in history, there would no reason for faith. History would simply be a mechanical execution of a predetermined plan. There would be no eternal mystery for which faith could yearn. But if God were completely concealed in history, there would also be no reason for faith. History would simply be a random and rudderless exercise of chaos. There would be no eternal justice in which faith could trust. "Somewhere between those two the Christian has to find his [or her] own balance between concealment and revelation."

This is the balance I try to find in my work as a Christian historian. For me, history is more than a series of tricks that we play on the dead, or that the dead play on us. History is more than simply an accidental chronology of first one thing happening, and then another. For me, history is also a source of revelation, a collection of wisdom. The archive is a treasure trove. Old books are windows on truth. Though, as St. Paul reminds us, we can only "see in the glass darkly," we must still try to look through the glass, and still try to learn from what we see. The challenge of the Christian historian is to search within the wisdom of the ages for some indication of the eternal wisdom of God. It is to try to seek God's revelation and judgment over time without presuming the power of divine judgment. It is to try to discern God's justice within God's joust.

John Witte, Jr. is the Jonas Robitscher Professor of Law and Ethics, Director of the Law and Religion Program, and Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Religion at Emory University.

A More Public Yeshiva

Naomi Schaefer

The investiture of a university president—that is, the ceremony in which the authority and symbols of that office are first conferred—is a celebratory occasion, but it must also be an anxious one. The responsibility for leading a large educational institution has always been tremendous, but in recent years, the duties of fundraiser and legal expert have been added to those of scholar, teacher, adviser, and public figurehead. Since taking office last year, for instance, Harvard president Larry Summers has proposed overhauling the core curriculum, signed on to a Supreme Court brief on affirmative action, publicly feuded with a prominent professor over academic standards, suggested returning ROTC to campus, and announced a several-hundred-million-dollar building project in a neighboring town. But despite Harvard's overwhelming size and influence, it may be that Richard Joel, the newly invested president of Yeshiva University, has a tougher road ahead of him than Summers.

Yeshiva, which was founded in 1886 as a small house of Jewish study on the Lower East Side, has since become a university with almost three thousand undergraduates and more than four thousand graduate students in its seven graduate schools all over New York City. The prominent Albert Einstein College of Medicine, the Cardozo School of Law, and the Wurzweiler School of Social Work, along with the highly selective Yeshiva College for Men and Stern College for Women, have combined to give the university a rank of fortieth in the *U.S. News & World Report* national survey, the same as Boston College's. Certainly, many of Yeshiva's students and faculty are wondering what Joel will do to continue his predecessor's lega-

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cy in making the school more competitive: How will Yeshiva bring in the best professors? How will it attract the Orthodox men and women who can attend Ivy League schools with big Jewish student programs instead? What will induce students to stay on campus on the weekends? Where will all the money for these improvements come from?

As interesting as those questions may be, they are not the most difficult. Yeshiva is also the flagship Orthodox Jewish university and the only major Jewish university in the country. The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary supplies a high percentage of the country's rabbis, and graduates of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education fill American Hebrew schools and Jewish day schools. Given the amount of influence that Yeshiva University has over the future of Jewish life, it is hardly surprising that the selection of Joel, only the fourth president of the university in its 117-year history, was a contentious process.

Indeed, the search for the new president lasted almost three years and considered candidates such as Dov Zakheim, the current Undersecretary of Defense (who withdrew from the running when a furor erupted over his lack of qualifications for the position), and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the chief Orthodox rabbi of England. Ultimately, the university's trustees decided that Richard Joel's experience as president of Hillel (an international foundation for Jewish campus life), Bronx assistant district attorney, associate dean of Yeshiva's law school, and parent of three Yeshiva grads would make him the right man for the job. But if there was any doubt in Joel's mind about all of the competing factions with which he would have to contend in setting out a new direction for the university, the investiture ceremony on September 21, 2003 should have settled them.

The sight of hundreds of professors in full academic regalia from Yeshiva and other institutions of higher education and learned rabbis in their dark suits and hats standing on the sidewalk waiting for the ceremony is a formidable one. As they process into the packed auditorium (overflow seating with a video feed is provided in the room next door) the small ensemble in the front of the room plays "Pomp and Circumstance" as well as the "Ode to Joy."

The secular music selections are followed by a decidedly religious invocation from Rabbi Zevulun Charlop, dean of the seminary. While acknowledging the various ways in which Yeshiva has changed since its founding, Charlop proudly notes that it has "stay[ed] the course." He notes that the refusal of the original institution to be subsumed by the American "melting pot" has created a stronger institution, one that still "resonates as surely as ever with the sounds and excitement of Volozhin [the home of the Lithuanian yeshivas], the model and progenitor of the idea of yeshiva for the last two centuries." Charlop speaks of the need to "bring the divine and unchanging message of our faith . . . to every nook and cranny of Jewish life."

The message may be unchanging but, as Stephen Trachtenberg, the president of George Washington University, who offers greetings at the investiture on behalf of "the university community," cannot help but point out, the messenger is now different. Joel is the first president of Yeshiva who is not also a rabbi. Trachtenberg, whose words for Joel are kind if religiously tone-deaf, finds Yeshiva's choice similar to that of Georgetown's recent installation of a lay president. (Loud whisperers from the row behind me hope he is wrong.) Trachtenberg notes that both institutions were looking for the "best person for the school as it is today." Though Trachtenberg is himself Jewish, he is more concerned with Yeshiva's academic reputation than its religious identity. So he "applaud[s] the departure" of Yeshiva from the tradition of having a president with a rabbinical degree.

The reaction of the secular studies faculty to having a non-rabbi in the head position seems similar to Trachtenberg's. Those who teach the humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences at Yeshiva College and the Sy Syms School of Business are quick to emphasize that Yeshiva is not a religious college at all. Some of the secular faculty may see the ascendance of Joel as a sign that they need not worry about the administration trying to bring religious ideas into secular disciplines—a move, they believe, that would impinge on their academic freedom.

The reaction of the religious faculty to this departure from tradition is less enthusiastic. Some of the more rightward-leaning rabbis, who see religious studies as the primary reason for attending Yeshiva and secular studies as a necessary evil, worry that a lay president might send the wrong signal to students about the relative importance of the two sides of the school. According to the *Jewish Week*, many of these rabbis and their student followers "recited Tehillim [Psalms], a prayerful response to times of crisis and danger," in anticipation of Joel's election, while 15 percent of respondents to the school paper's survey believe "Joel's presidency will be a disaster for Yeshiva." To make matters more complicated, some of the centrists on the university and seminary faculty worry that Joel's lack of a rabbinical degree will prevent him from garnering enough respect from the religious leaders of the school to keep the former group of rabbis in line.

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In fact, there is reason to believe that unlike his counterpart at Georgetown, Joel will not be leading Yeshiva down the path toward secularization, or even maintaining the current separation between religious and secular education. Joel is not only strictly Orthodox himself, but he spent his fourteen years as president of Hillel trying to bring a greater level of observance and Jewish learning to a generation of Jews at secular colleges and universities. (During Joel's tenure, the annual budget at Hillel increased from $14 million to $52 million and the organization opened twenty-six new facilities.) Nor is it likely, given the respect he seems to command in the Orthodox community, that the more extreme rabbis will be able to ignore his leadership.

Of course, Joel was not picked because he was the most religiously learned of the candidates. As the presence of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg at the investiture suggests, Yeshiva is trying to take seriously the role of its graduates in public life. Most scholars agree that the Orthodox world has undergone a shift toward greater insularity in the last two decades, the result both of more young men and women studying in Israel at borderline fundamentalist yeshivas and of a secular American society that seems more and more hostile (in its popular entertainment and legal separation of church and state) to religious Jews.

Joel is a man who clearly feels a strong commitment to public life, both Jewish and secular. His legal expertise was not only put to use for the people of New York during his years as assistant district attorney in the Bronx, but two years ago, Joel presided over a commission investigating the sexual misconduct of Rabbi Baruch Lanner, the director of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth, the Orthodox Union's educational arm. The report not only forced the Union to come clean about the misconduct but also about the three decades of cover-ups by high-ranking staff that surrounded it. Joel's investigation, which rejected the idea that these matters should only be discussed within the Jewish community, eventually led to Lanner's prosecution and conviction.

Discerning the Jewish community's relationship to American public life is only one part of the equation, however, as Israeli Ambassador Daniel Ayalon reminded the investiture audience. He noted that so far two thousand Yeshiva alumni have "made their lives in Israel." Plenty of Reform and Conservative Jewish leaders in America have recently suggested visiting Israel or buying its products as a way of supporting its economy during these difficult times—indeed, the secular Mayor Bloomberg receives a standing ovation when he mentions his recent trip to Israel in which he visited some victims of suicide bombing attacks—but the pitch to pick up and move there is unusual outside the Orthodox community.

Here, among Yeshiva families, though, there are young men and women who have no plans to stay in the U.S. a moment after graduation, who are here only to get their degrees and have little or no commitment to life in America. Joel's own son recently made *aliyah*. But the question of how a Jewish university in America talks to its students about Israel—should they give up their safe lives here and put their families in danger in order to ensure Israel's survival in this time of crisis?—is another one that Joel will have to face.

By the time Joel begins his own address, more than an hour into the ceremony, he seems anxious about the duties that await him and impatient to get started in fulfilling them. Taking off his academic cap and adjusting the yarmulke underneath, Joel, a large man with a deep, friendly smile, recalls the journey that has taken him to this point: a father now passed away, who left Vilnius for South Africa and then America, his own bar mitzvah forty years ago to the day, his education under the tutelage of various members of the audience, the rearing of his own six children.

Mostly, though, Joel talks about Yeshiva's future. He announces particular steps toward a better university: a genetic research facility at the medical school, a more active campus life for undergraduates, a more student-friendly administrative attitude, higher standards for secular subjects, an extensive community service program, a stronger professional education component at the seminary, more faculty who are devoted to both religious and secular learning, an expanded student internship program in Israel, and more interdisciplinary contact across the school. He also adumbrates the vision behind these disparate initiatives.

> [We] gather at a time when universities have been in retreat for a generation. While pursuing achievement and proficiency, the university has turned from . . . poetry, and has become too much a place of prose. . . . A new generation comes of age, longing for . . . a life that makes sense, feeling profound existential loneliness, while living in a shrinking world that, paradoxically, produces feelings of anonymity. Our children long to matter, yearning for an informing vision of values that makes life work. They confront a madness of license on the one hand and extremist, hateful fundamentalism on the other that seeks to extinguish the light of ideas and the lyric melody of values. . . .

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> A great university must rebuild a spirit of free inquiry, while embracing the immutability of life values that are nonnegotiable. It must teach the skills of navigating the terrain, while reaching for the cosmos. Its challenge is not to defend Western Civilization, but to advance Western Civilization.

Pondering the efforts of the men and women who have come before him, Joel notes that Yeshiva represents "a yearning for all that is sacred in our humanity and all that is human in our sanctity." At the reception following the investiture, the university's gym has the trappings of any academic celebration—the ice sculptures, the (kosher) sushi, the balloons, the music, the decadent chocolates—but Richard Joel seems to understand that Yeshiva is not just any academic institution. It has a large, perhaps inordinate, measure of responsibility for the future of Jewish leadership in America, and the world. And that responsibility is every bit as complicated as it is urgent.

Naomi Schaefer, an adjunct fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, is writing a book on religious colleges to be published by St. Martin's Press next fall.

Luther, the Movie

Edward T. Oakes

At least among sociologists of religion, if not journalists, it has become something of a cliché that liberal churches inevitably lose members while conservative ones continue to grow. Perhaps the most vivid—indeed garish—example of this trend would be the Church of England (and its Episcopal offshoots in North America and Australia). The English nation comprises about sixty-seven million inhabitants, but despite the inertia of history and the power of a state-sanctioned Establishment, barely over a half-million attend an Anglican service in England on any given Sunday. But evangelical storefront churches in east London are growing, seemingly at exponential rates. It would seem that when it comes to church attendance, what is doctrinally convenient is not the same thing as what is theologically compelling.

But if observers credit the Anglican communion with being ahead of the game in luridly public acts of self-implosion, they must at least give the Lutheran churches in Germany and the United States credit for providing a cinematic corollary to this sociological maxim. In an apparent effort to stem the tide of Lutheranism's own diminishing church membership, the Lutheran-owned insurance company Thrivent (with additional grants from the state-supported Lutheran Church in Germany) has sunk a considerable amount of its fortune into supporting—indeed largely underwriting—the costs of a new movie on Martin Luther, titled simply *Luther*.

Suspecting the movie might prove a total bomb, I attended it on opening day, at a large suburban cineplex; and although the parking lot was filled, I saw fewer than a dozen moviegoers in that particular screening room. Later that same week one of the professors at the seminary where I teach accompanied his class in Reformation Theology to the movie, and only three people besides the seven hapless seminarians and two of their teachers were in attendance. No surprise there, for the film is monumentally dull, primarily because the screenplay makes no effort whatever to give the viewer any notion of what the real Luther was like. It must be some kind of achievement to spend that much money on a Lutheran-sponsored movie and yet still insure that *not once* in the entire film does the character of Luther so much as quote, even in passing, from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans or even enunciate that lumpy word "justification." Thus the famous interrogation between Luther and the Dominican monk Johannes Eck at the Diet of Worms in 1521 (when Luther made his famous "Here I Stand" speech, thus making irreparable the rupture between Rome and the budding Reformation) comes across not as a theological dispute but more like the grilling of a Hollywood director before the House Un-American Activities Committee in the postwar era.

Under that rubric, the Catholic Church must serve as (of course, what else?) the medieval equivalent of McCarthyism. But without Luther's theology of justification as a backdrop, I cannot help but think that the typical consumer of Hollywood fare might prefer Rome to Wittenberg. Or at least the Rome of papal palaces (of which we see plenty), for papal quarters are doted over in this film as if we were watching a kind of "Lifestyles of the Papally Rich and Famous." Wittenberg, on the other hand, comes across as almost invariably gray, rainy, dirty, and sordid, most especially after the Radical Reformers wreak their destructive havoc. Although the movie does not have Pope Leo X say the line long attributed to him upon his papal election ("Now that We have come into the papacy, let Us enjoy it"), the avuncular Leo does seem to be rather enjoying himself, especially when he gets a chance to feed his pet birds in a cage larger than most people's living rooms. Luther's own prince of Saxony, Frederick the Wise (played by Peter Ustinov with his typically

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bemused, if world-weary, cynicism), coos over his collection of relics like Citizen Kane lovingly preserving his boyhood snow sled, Rosebud. (Frederick also was largely responsible for unleashing, with Luther's active encouragement, the slaughter of the peasants of Saxony when the Reformation started getting out of hand, but in the movie both the prince and Luther seem quite caught off guard by an event that they had in fact actively instigated and supported.)

By the time Luther decides to marry the runaway nun Katherina von Bora, the viewer even begins to suspect that the (equally state-supported) Catholic Church in Germany might actually be the real underwriter of the film, for Luther's wife comes across as a nagging shrew who even hectors her husband in their marriage bed on the first night after their wedding. Making Mrs. Luther seem like a sex-starved Long Island housewife, rolling-pin always in hand, might not be the best argument in the world for celibacy, but she certainly should give pause to advocates of a married clergy. Nor do Luther's spiritual struggles seem very real once St. Paul's theology has been airbrushed away. His famous duels with the devil in his monastic cell, for example, are made to look like the writhings of a schizophrenic locked inside the isolation ward of a mental hospital.

But what probably should most appall Lutherans about this flat presentation of Luther's life is that, whenever the plot starts to get too complicated to fit into a two-hour movie, the writers and director resort to shameless hokum. Instead of a movie that takes the Reformation doctrine of justification to heart, we are given Luther as a Christ-like moonbeam in the manner of Franco Zeffirelli's portrayal of St. Francis of Assisi in *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*. The actor playing Luther, Joseph Fiennes (of *Shakespeare in Love* fame), looks much more like a typical Hollywood rendition of Jesus than like Hans Holbein's famous portrait of the portly Luther. And throughout the movie, almost as a leitmotiv to keep the viewer's interest up during the distracting and complicated plot, Luther radiates a wonder-working sanctity, appearing more like a medieval saint than the relic-smashing Reformer known to history: almost from the start of the film, we are shown a crippled girl who gradually learns to walk by the simple expedient, it would seem, of meeting up with Martin at key moments in her young life. Not exactly a miracle, admittedly, but in Hollywood terms, it sure looks like it.

The real surprise comes at the conclusion when the credits roll, for then the viewer learns for the first time that the film was underwritten by Thrivent and the Evangelical Church of Germany. If these two groups supported this film to win over new followers to Lutheranism, or even to win respect for Luther's theological witness, they should ask for their money back.

Edward T. Oakes, S.J., is Chester & Margaret Paluch Professor of Theology at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, the seminary for the Archdiocese of Chicago.

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Diverse Diversities

Barry Bercier

Diversity can rightly be called a value-free term. All it does, ordinarily, is identify a condition of unlikeness between or among things. It reports this difference as a fact and by itself indicates nothing of the goodness or badness of that fact. Rather, the happenstance of goodness or badness depends on factors other than the diversity itself. The population, for example, is marked by diverse conditions of physical and mental well-being among its members. Some are healthy, others are sick. Better if all were healthy and there were no diversity on this score. Diversity here happens to be linked to a deviation from the normative conditions of health and well-being. It's bad. The presence of physical suffering and mental anguish does not ground the "celebration of diversity" recommended by bumper stickers and university administrators.

But then of course universities use the term not as the morally neutral term it is. Rather they transform it into a buzzword to identify an ideal of university education. And that ideal, like all objects of human aspiration, presupposes a comprehensive view of mankind—one according to which human beings are poised to become, merely through their own efforts, psychologically and spiritually complete. Recognizing the pathological consequences of this false conception of diversity is crucial. But even more important is coming to understand the truth that it actively (though perhaps unconsciously) seeks to obscure—namely, the truth about human diversity and its implications for our hopes for wholeness.

BARRY BERCIER *is a member of the Augustinians of the Assumption, founders of Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he teaches in the theology department.*

I

Universities must have standards; they stand or fall by them. Standardized tests, admission requirements, grades, hiring procedures, peer evaluations, tenure reviews, accreditation processes—all are necessary to any university, since the institution itself is part of a political and social order whose ideals and standards it should uphold. The university can even be defined as an institution for the preservation and transmission of standards for many kinds of human excellence: excellence in wisdom, prudence, art, science, skills, even athletics.

The university, as a product of the tradition of the West, has occupied itself since its beginnings with the definitive standards of the West. Only very recently, however, has diversity been used as a term to designate a standard for a distinctive and significant area of excellence to be fostered by the university.

Does the emphasis on diversity indicate the discovery of a new human excellence?

Surely there is something new here, but it is hard to see what it is. For the new use of the term "diversity" obscures what its usage aims to effect. The fact is that the "celebration of diversity" means to represent a kind of liberation from standards themselves, standards understood to produce homogeneity by systematically excluding and oppressing whatever is "different."

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Now the plain truth of the matter is that standards discriminate. Standards are precisely those measures by which preferences are determined and choices are made. Teaching students to discriminate well—to discern and judge between the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the worthy and the base, the just and the unjust—is central to the work of a university. It is in fact essential to the pursuit of truth itself, because to discriminate is to mark differences, to discern the texture and quality of the diversity of the world.

At the same time, to discriminate well and wisely is to note that while some acts of discrimination serve justice by setting each thing in its proper place, others can serve injustice by systematically excluding some from the place that is properly theirs. The racial background of a student or teacher or administrator, for example, has no intrinsic bearing on the capacity of that person to measure up to the standards of a well-constituted university. Racial discrimination should play no part in academic discrimination, and the imposition of racial standards onto the judgment made about who should or should not participate in the life of the university makes no sense and is a plain violation of right order and justice.

Still, someone might make the following argument. The university must preserve and transmit the definitive standards of the West. One such standard is justice. In a racially diverse society, justice requires the elimination of racial discrimination from the academy, and justice in this instance will yield racial diversity. Racial diversity, then, is in itself a form of the idea of justice that it is the university's function to preserve and transmit. Diversity therefore becomes a legitimate goal and standard of academic life.

Now it is true that in a multiracial political body like the United States justice requires that the university have a multiracial composition. If the conditions of life in the U.S. were truly just, and if the university did not practice racial discrimination, the university would be quite spontaneously diverse in racial make-up. But this of course would not be the case in a racially homogeneous society such as Japan or Saudi Arabia. Racial diversity, then, is only in particular instances a standard for justice; it is not just in itself. Moreover, although the university ought to examine, preserve, and transmit universal standards of justice in the West while also practicing them internally, it is the task of governments to legislate and enforce justice as expressed in laws written to fit the particular and changing conditions of society.

The fact is that the conditions that make for racial imbalance in the American university have not in recent years been caused by the university's practice of racial discrimination against minorities. The conditions that produce those imbalances are rather the consequences of injustices at work within the political body as a whole and over a long period of time. In the case of blacks especially, the long-festering consequences of slavery—consequences left too much without adequate remedy—have produced generation after generation of blacks who are not by and large prepared for the demands of university education. There is a great injustice here, about which the university in its own proper way should be concerned. But the university, and specifically its offices for recruitment, admissions, and hiring, is not in itself the agent to remedy this injustice.

Government is the chief agent of such remedies. Government might call on the university to direct its attention to the problem of racial injustice, and it may very properly forbid the university to practice racial injustice. But it is a foolish and superficial governmental policy to demand that the university abandon the standards that are its raison d'etre and admit the unprepared so that the university might present a racially diverse appearance. And likewise it is a silly and grandiose university policy that would act as if the university were an arm of the government itself and aim to eliminate racial injustice in America by twisting and stretching otherwise sound policies of recruitment, admissions, and hiring. Such pseudo-remedies, while they weaken and disrupt the life of the university, can have no remedial effect on the problem supposedly addressed by them. The admission of the unprepared to the university will not make of them well-educated citizens. Without proper preparation, their education will be a charade whose consequences can only be demoralizing to everyone involved.

To this point, the argument for diversity is superficial and wrongheaded, but it is more generous and good-hearted than perverse. The argument can arise from places deeper still, however—obscure, subterranean, and angry places. It might pour itself out like this: black slavery was an enormous crime; it produced profound, abiding habits of vicious racial hatred and culpable injustice. The racial exclusiveness of the university is itself a product of those perverse habits of heart and mind. University claims about the importance of academic standards are themselves hypocritical instruments of an enduring racist mentality. When the preservation of "academic standards" resists and delays the swift achievement of racial diversity, racial diversity should trump those standards. It is thus not black students who need preparation; it is the university that must be deconstructed and built on new foundations.

At this point, diversity emerges not as a fledgling and friendly standard to be nestled among the older

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standards that have traditionally defined the university but rather as a proclamation of a transvaluation of all values, an attack on the very heart of the university and on the whole constellation of principles that constitute its life. Here diversity breaks free of questions of racial justice and calls into question the standards of justice themselves as they have historically been represented by the university. The righteous anger roused in the face of black slavery surges forward as a driving force clearing the path for an assault on all authoritative institutions taken to be implicated in such crimes. The anger directed against slavery serves in fact as the spearhead of another anger, one originating at a far deeper level of the soul of Western man and concerned with a host of things that have less to do with racism, American history, or slavery (or, for that matter, the war in Vietnam, "the military-industrial complex," "the Establishment," or "globalization") than they have to do with the constitution of the West itself.

That there is a significant reservoir of anger against the West among members of the university elite became breathtakingly apparent in their reflexive response to the attacks of September 11, 2001. When self-described enemies of the West, blind to their own criminality and fanatically convinced rather of their heroic holiness, slaughtered thousands of innocent citizens, the first reaction of many university elites was in effect to side with the perpetrators and accuse the West of having merited the harm it suffered. Their question, heard again and again, was, "What have we, the West, done wrong that has so angered them?" There was an automatic presumption of the justice of the anti-Western terrorists and of the culpable malfeasance of the West. The murder of our own innocents did not elicit from the university elites acknowledgment of the fact that Islamic fundamentalism has for a long time now been violently expressing its "anger" in all parts of the world—West, East, North, South, and, not least, in the Islamic world itself. Rather, a different anger, one ordinarily hidden under the cover of academic prestige and decorum, showed itself clearly for what it is: a longstanding animus against the West.

While it is reasonable and necessary to ask what rouses anger in the Muslim world, the question for us to consider here is different: What rouses such anger among Western university elites against the West in general and against the university in particular?

The anti-Western animus of the advocates of diversity comes into clearest sight once the issue of diversity moves beyond the good-hearted but wrongheaded efforts to rectify the specific historical injustices produced by American slavery and begins to be applied to the "celebration" of all cultures. Abandoning a reasonable and properly central concern with the tradition of the West—the source, matrix, and first home of the university—the advocates of diversity insist on an indiscriminate approval of and concern with all cultures, treating the West as, at best, one among many other equals. In the name of a kind of universal cultural equality—that is, in the name of an oddly distorted version of the Western vision of all human beings as created equally in the image and likeness of God—it is asserted that all cultures are to be treated as equal, that the choice of various cultural standards is a matter of mere accident or preference—a matter, that is, of pure indifference.

Any claim that the West might make for the truth of its founding principles, even the principle of equality misappropriated here, is rendered illegitimate. There can be no claim to truth in these matters, only to indifferent preferences. And as a terrible consequence, the West's attachment to the search for truth itself as central to its life and identity is rendered void. There is no truth. The truth as the defining aim of the university, the truth as the one (*unus*) goal towards which all turn (*vertor*), the soul of the uni-versity, is cut out. The insistence on radical diversity radically undoes the university, diverts it from its center, and leaves its parts reeling out of orbit.

The plain disingenuousness of asserting the equality of all cultures, as if it were made righteously in the defense of non-Western cultures against the predations of Western cultural hegemony, becomes perfectly apparent when one considers the judgment made by those other cultures about the idea that all cultures are equal. Most cultures regard themselves as not at all equal, but rather as having rank and worthiness. The demotion of Western culture in the name of the equal value of all cultures has the unintended consequence of an effective devaluation of all cultures. The supposed respect brought by the advocates of diversity to non-Western cultures is, for those cultures, a singular form of disrespect, arising (as it must seem to them) out of the West itself. The advocates of diversity set themselves up as the judges of all the cultures of the earth, finding all of those cultures pleasing and failing to notice the arrogance of their claims.

It is not the serious and thoughtful love of all the other cultures that drives the advocates of diversity into such foolishness. It is not love of the other but the angry rejection of one's own that is at work. Which brings us to the heart of the matter—the point at which the false and destructive notion of diversity that prevails in today's university runs up against the reality of humanity's genuine diversity and its far-reaching consequences.

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II

Consider the direct assault made by the advocates of diversity on what we might call the genetic base of the Western tradition, the most primary locus of its preservation and transmission, the family. For included among those standards that the principle of diversity would delegitimize is the vast and highly nuanced complex of standards concerning sex, gender, and the family that has been crucial for the West. In the name of the ancient Western principles of freedom and equality—principles traceable in the deepest and most important respect to the teaching of Genesis that man is made "in the image and likeness of God"—radical diversity denies the essential correlate to that teaching: "Male and female He created them." In the rejection of that teaching, gender is reduced to the rank of a cultural construct, and as with the other constructs of culture construed by radical diversity, such differences all become a matter of accident, preference, and indifference. The celebration of diversity, in its reach for exclusive dominance, brushes aside the diversity that is sexual duality and sets out in its place a meaningless, polymorphous, and radically individualized eroticism.

At this point we see that the ideology of radical diversity stands in opposition not only to the West, but to all the cultures of the world, none of which make the radical break with nature that we see expressed here. For gender, the sexual difference, is a duality written into nature itself. The complementary duality of the sexes is the structure of most living things, all but the lowest life forms—though even in them the genetic code is preserved and transmitted in the dual spiraling strands of the DNA molecule. To speak of sexual difference is to speak of two: male and female. The difference here is as fundamental to nature and human nature as the principle of noncontradiction is to logic and thought. Gender differences generate living reality and are so embedded in it that they find expression in the structures of human speech itself, and not merely in the specific vocabulary sometimes labeled as "sexist." The silliness of rewriting the Bible in a "nonsexist" or "inclusive" manner, by finding ways to skirt masculine pronouns, is an easy project, but gender pervades the entire grammatical structure of languages—nouns, adjectives, and in some languages (the Bible's own Hebrew) even some verb forms.

The difference between the sexes is no accident or matter of indifference. It is fundamental to the workings of human nature. It determines the structure of the body. It impresses itself on the operations of the mind. It expresses itself in the way lives are lived. It is the active antecedent to all cultures. And perhaps most significant for the purposes of this essay, it sets limits to what is, and to what belongs to, the individual as such—because what is at stake here is nothing less than how we are to regard the human individual in the most fundamental and decisive way.

In the engendered duality of human life, every single individual is marked by a fundamental incompleteness, by the absence of any fully realizable self-sufficiency. Plato's Aristophanes was right—every one is us is not fully one but is rather only half, partial. One's individual life is received from another, from one's mother in one way and from one's father in another. The span of that life is limited, bounded by one's mortality and, in the most common case, defined by the activities involved in getting offspring to replace one's mortal passing self. Only in relation to and dependence upon the sexual other can one achieve the quasi-immortality of offspring. A person is dependent on the duality of his parents' sex to receive his life, and dependent on the duality of the sex of himself and his mate to continue his life through his children.

The individual is fundamentally incomplete and thus drawn into relations beyond himself. Because of the lack of self-sufficiency built into the fact of sexual duality, the individual is impelled to take part in a host of external relationships; in this way he becomes something superior to any supposedly self-sufficient version of human being that one might try to imagine. The sexual duality quite literally produces the entire human world and draws into that world the participation of every individual. Sexual incompletness means that life is not static, contained merely by the one, and so sterile; instead, it is fluid, dynamic, and fertile. It flows. Sexual incompletness means that each is not locked within himself alone and always the same, but that one is thrust into a great river of relationships and of differences. Both the beginning and the end of that totality are not within one's sight or grasp. Life in its splendor and diversity is, in short, a mystery. It is no blank force to be interrupted, "vexed," manipulated, controlled. It cannot be contained or possessed. It can only be received as a gift, shared with others, and finally given away.

It is this living diversity that the university seeks to contemplate, understand, and serve.

When the ideology of diversity attacks the sexual duality of human nature, it postulates an individual radically self-sufficient, self-creative, and self-possessed, autonomous, monadic, undefined by the order of nature, utterly alone, out of all relationship and without responsibility. He owes nothing to the past and nothing to the future. He needs no parents,

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no spouse, no children. His judgment on things needs no teacher. It is beholden to no tradition, is adequate unto itself merely because it is his own—every thought that might enter his head is "true for him" merely because he thinks it so. His passions, his feelings, are their own complete and final arbiter, justified merely because they are there. His soul can range between limp indifference and wild fanaticism, but locked within itself alone it is sterile. He might think himself entitled to rule over everything, but he will come of sheer necessity to be ruled by real forces outside his deluded self, forces that exist and are real whatever he may think or not think about them.

As the university becomes increasingly populated by such spiritually sexless beings, and as such habits of mind are congratulated and flattered in the "celebration of diversity," the university in fact begins to die a shameful and sorry sort of death, abandoning its mission whole. As the cheerful, silly patina of diversity wears off, and only the gray, lame excuse of "Whatever!" remains, we will have brought our students to stand for nothing. The West stands for something, not for just anything, and that something matters dearly. Even in its most simpleminded and generous form, the ideology of diversity misses this crucial and now most urgent point.

But it is precisely this something that the radical ideologues of diversity hate. The object of their anger is not the striking (and deeply ambiguous) recent cultural products of the West. As much as they may attack technology in the name of environmentalism, or capitalism in the name of some obscure "social justice," university elites are primary movers, shakers, and beneficiaries of technology and the capitalist economy. Neither in any serious way is the "military-industrial complex" or "globalism" their bugbear. They live more or less comfortably with all these things and can no more do without them than can the rest of us. The driving anger is far deeper and both more visceral and more principled. Its object is not the later products of the West but rather its sources, less the surfeit of things that it spreads out around us and much more the weight of demands that the West presses on us from within.

Sexual incompleteness expresses itself in part by the pervasive restlessness and unease of erotic longing. That longing establishes within each of us a tension vis-à-vis the other. As it is treated in the classic sources of the West, in texts such as the Bible or Plato's dialogues on love, that tension is somehow in part constitutive of the soul's highest well-being, and is itself an aspect of a tension that runs deeper still. The tension might well be called metaphysical, perhaps, or spiritual. It stretches us out between the here and now, and the far-off hidden beginning and the far-off hidden end, to the source and goal that we cannot currently see or possess. The West offers no resolution to this tension, no Nirvana, no rush to Paradise in a martyr's self-immolation, no return to the animal's peace of soul. Rather, as the West has classically understood it, the human truth stands in the living out of the tension itself, the acceptance of a kind of uneasy suspension and suspense. The highest hope is for an object that is beyond our grasp. Each of us is called to place his own life, meaning, and final identity on hold and into the hands of Another.

There is here a kind of self-denial and demand for trust which a man might very well hate and resent. There is a standard here that expresses itself in a terrible complex of dispositions and demands which weigh on a man, confront him relentlessly, and can come to provoke in him the deepest anger of all. If the West has shown itself to be boundlessly fertile in political inventiveness and profuse artistic production (the more recent explosion of economic and technological powers might fall into another category here), its greatest treasure is interior, a matter of the mind. It is precisely that terrible complex of dispositions of the heart and mind, weighing so on a man, that is that treasure.

The greatness of the Western mind is at the same time its willingness, out of the love for truth, to submit to that truth and acknowledge its own limitations. The greatness of the West consists in the readiness of people to be small as they are truly small. This is its virtue. The intellectual virtues as presented by, say, Aristotle—wisdom, practical judgment, productive skill, etc.—virtues that appeal to a person's pride, receive a kind of chastisement from the Socratic understanding that came earlier still, where wisdom is always first a matter of the recognition of one's own ignorance. Under the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition as it enters the heart of the West, intellectual claims are tempered in yet a deeper way when they submit themselves to the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. The soul-shaking experience of Abraham becomes a central element in the mind of the West: "The terror of a great darkness fell upon Abraham" (Genesis 15:12). Abraham becomes fertile only after he has endured this darkness.

The awestruck and reverent silence of Abraham before the majesty of God stands at the farthest possible remove from the self-satisfied indifference of our contemporary "easy-going nihilists." After his encounter with the darkness, Abraham does not shrug his shoulders, slouch in his seat, and dismiss it all with a cynical "Whatever!" Instead he fathers the

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nation that stands at the deepest root of the traditions of the Western world.

The university, to keep alive the memory of the Socratic humility and the awe of Abraham, hands on a constellation of difficult moral and intellectual virtues. One's own passion is to be pruned, restrained, and trained in submission to reason and its attunement to what is greater than the individual alone. Political virtue, the virtue of citizens, is based not on tribe or on loyalties to what is merely one's own, but on submission to law as a work of reason applied to the common good of all. The pursuit of understanding cannot be reduced to any self-assured dogmatism because it demands an unyielding intellectual probity and necessarily entails a kind of relentless restlessness, unease, and incertitude. It includes the lived awareness that complete happiness cannot be obtained within the limits of the human condition, that a man is what and who he is, and that one cannot escape himself. It means the acceptance of an ineluctable personal responsibility, the burden of self-doubt, and the guilt that falls to men who believe they are to live "in the image and likeness of God."

These virtues produce tension, they demand endurance, self-denial, and the acceptance of ambiguity. They raise one up to a kind of unblinking and deeply humble realism. They do not regard an individual as self-sufficient and cannot allow him to settle into technocratic arrogance, fanatical self-assurance, indifferent lassitude. These virtues are a deep affront, therefore, to the childish pretensions and illusions of the supposedly self-creative, self-sufficient, and self-satisfied individual.

The wildest and most terrible political movements of the last century sought nothing less than totalitarian change, a world other than the world that is, in a kind of final solution to all life's injustices and sufferings. The "New Man" or the "Aryan Race" would emerge and at last all would be well. Only destroy the real world and a brave new world of justice, peace, and contentment will emerge. The self-sufficient man is certain it can be accomplished.

In the final analysis, the ideology of radical diversity surreptitiously promotes a political program of the same kind. It delegitimizes the standards of the West and proposes standards that belong to none of the cultures it "celebrates." In the name of diversity it reduces all cultures to an indifferent sameness, removing from each of them any serious, and therefore dangerous, claim it might make to truth. It deprives them of their vital form and reduces them to mere matter, passive stuff for a new reworking. In effect it would impose a politics of absolute compassion that removes all suffering. All tension can be relaxed, all ambiguity resolved, all responsibility lifted, all guilt absolved, and every last scrap of life's meaning flicked away in a multicultural celebration of feeling good about ourselves, groundlessly. Whatever and whatever. Amen.

If a university wants to champion the cause of diversity, especially if a *Christian* university aims to do this, it had better think twice, and maybe three times. It must choose between the sensible pursuit of a rich variety of well-prepared students and faculty for the serious and sober mission of university education—and an amicable and unnoticed capitulation to ideological forces directly opposed to everything the university should stand for. And as of now, it is to signal just that capitulation that the rainbow banner of diversity waves. FT

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Jane Austen, Public Theologian

Peter J. Leithart

To call Jane Austen a public theologian is counterintuitive for two reasons: she does not seem much interested in things public, and she does not seem much interested in things theological.

With regard to the second point, Austen's novels rarely deal openly with theological themes or issues, and even her private letters—the ones that survived her sister's destruction—seldom speak of religious subjects. She was a lifelong member of the Church of England and her father and two brothers were Anglican ministers. By all accounts she was a Christian, yet she displays a high Anglican reticence about religious experience, and a similarly Anglican disinterest in the niceties of theological debate.

On the first point, Austen's novels seem to be relentlessly concerned with private life, concerned with "three or four families in a country town," as she put it in one famous letter. This is all the more remarkable when we consider the events of her lifetime. Though living through a period that witnessed the birth of an independent United States, the French Revolution and the Terror, the Napoleonic wars and the rise of revolutionary romanticism, the evangelical revivals and the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, she focuses on a few middling gentry families in rural England. Touches of the wider world sometimes impinge on Austen's peaceful outposts—Wickham, a soldier, plays a prominent role in *Pride and Prejudice*, there are passing references to the British colonies and the slave trade in *Mansfield Park*, and the British navy's preservation of England in the Napoleonic Wars is duly noted in *Persuasion*. For the most part, though, her characters go about their farming and their business, their follies and especially their romances, their dances and their games of backgammon and whist, as if nothing has changed. Soldiers and sailors, when they appear, are always on leave.

Well-read as she and her family were, it is impossible that Austen was ignorant of the transformations taking place around her. She read poetry and novels, including those from the Romantic period, and she knew the literature of her time well enough to parody it. We know too that her family was directly affected by a number of these events. Two of her brothers fought Napoleon as members of the British navy. Philadelphia Austen, Jane's aunt, had a daughter named Eliza who married a Frenchman, Jean Capot, Comte de Feuillide. The unfortunate Capot was guillotined during the Terror, and his widow Eliza later married Jane's brother Henry to become Jane's sister-in-law. Her favorite brother, Henry, was a clergyman of evangelical stripe, and several letters show that Jane herself knew something of evangelicalism (she did not like it much, though her attitudes apparently shifted during her lifetime). Jane herself toyed with the idea of writing a biography of Napoleon.

PETER J. LEITHART *is Senior Fellow of Theology and Literature at New St. Andrews College, Moscow, Idaho, and pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Moscow. This article is adapted from his book* Miniatures and Morals: The Christian Novels of Jane Austen, *forthcoming from Canon Press.*

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Yet, to reiterate, this wider world has almost no role in Austen's novels. I wish to maintain, however, that despite her apparent indifference to both theology and the public realm, she can be read as a public theologian.

What most interests Austen about Christianity is precisely its public and institutional dimension, its role as a national "teacher" of morals. Hence her recurring attention to the clergy. Two of her clerical characters, Mr. Collins (of *Pride and Prejudice*) and Mr. Elton (of *Emma*), are insensitive morons, and she has no toleration for the kind of hypocritical pomposity that they represent. Nor, in *Mansfield Park*, does she have much use for the vacuous religiosity of Dr. Grant, who is a pastor only in name and not in fact. This hardly means that she is anticlerical; some of the most severe satire of the clergy in church history has come from devout Christians incensed at the abuses of their leaders. Like them, Austen attacks false clergy not to destroy clergy; she attacks false clergy to defend the true.

On the other side, several of her heroes are ordained or soon to be so. Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility* is a nonentity in this regard, and one fears that Henry Tilney of *Northanger Abbey* is too detached and ironic to be much of a pastor, though he provides both intellectual and moral training for the heroine, Catherine Morland. The last of the clerical heroes, Edmund Bertram, is far and away the best model, and the issue of the public role of the Church takes on a great deal of importance in *Mansfield Park*. Still, the fact is that in half of Austen's finished novels the hero is a clergyman, and two of the other novels have important clerical characters. (The only novel in which clergy play virtually no role is *Persuasion*, though even there Charles Hayter is destined for the cloth.)

Evidence of Austen's theological contribution—and of my thesis—is strongest in *Mansfield Park*. When Austen wrote about it in a letter (to her sister Cassandra, January 29, 1813), she said she intended "to write of something else;—it shall be a complete change of subject—Ordination." Indeed, that is its unlikely focus. As a result, *Mansfield Park*, frequently despised as Austen's worst novel, is in fact her greatest and most important, though admittedly far from the most entertaining. Moreover, the novel presents one of the most searching and provocative accounts of modern individualism to be found in fiction. It is a thick description of the kinds of habits of speech and personal conduct, motivations and intentions, political and social views that emerge from uncontrolled individualism. And it traces this insidious individualism precisely to the marginalization of the Church in the life of England, the failure of clergy to be the makers of English manners, and the consequent intrusion of other forces as the makers of manners.

Austen describes this kind of individualism, its origins and effects, without ever using the words "individual" or "individualism." Individualism probably did not exist as a word (Tocqueville said in the 1830s that it was newly minted), and the word "individual" earlier meant "indivisible." Instead, Austen, like Shakespeare, explores the phenomenon of individualism using the trope of "acting." In a play, only the worst actors (like Bottom) want to change roles. The good actor has been assigned his role and does not want to become somebody else. If he did so, the play would fall apart. If Laertes suddenly became Hamlet or Oedipus changed places with Tiresias, that would, to put it mildly, disrupt the play—though, as Tom Stoppard has realized, if Rosencrantz changed places with Guildenstern nobody would notice (not even the characters). In a traditional society, the goal of life is to act well in the assigned role—to say your lines properly, to do what your role assigns to you. Everybody has a "fixed fate" set (perhaps) by his birth, and his purpose is not to find a new fate, but to adjust to it. In such a traditional society, ethics is bound up with playing the role well; the question "What shall I do?" always presupposes an answer to the question "What place do I have here? Who am I?"

Peter Berger summarizes this social and ethical vision:

> A role . . . may be defined as a typified response to a typified expectation. Society has predefined the fundamental typology. To use the language of the theater, from which the concept of role is derived, we can say that society provides the script for all the dramatis personae. The individual actors, therefore, need but slip into the roles already assigned to them before the curtain goes up. As long as they play their roles as provided for in this script, the social play can proceed as planned.

And Berger goes on to point out that every social role has a particular identity attached to it. Some of the roles are fairly trivial and easily changed; others are nearly impossible to alter. But any change in role is a change in "who you are." The ethical imperative is to grow into those roles. At first, the uniform may not fit; we may find ourselves dwarves dressed in the clothing of giants; but we are called to grow into our role.

In this sense, Austen's conception of social order is traditional and theatrical. But she saw another kind of

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"role-playing" and another kind of "theatricality" being born in the society around her. In *Mansfield Park* she contrasts the traditional notion of social "role" with this new individualist notion, and shows the causes and effects of this change.

The heroine of *Mansfield Park* is Fanny Price, who comes from her crowded home in Portsmouth to live at Mansfield Park, the home of her uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram. She grows up with Sir Thomas' children—Tom, Edmund, Julia, and Maria—of whom only Edmund shows kindness to his cousin. Fanny is shy and retiring, always feeling that she is out of place in the house, a feeling reinforced by the bullying from her other aunt, Mrs. Norris, who since the death of her husband has lived with the Bertrams.

The action of the story depends on two visitors from London, Henry and Mary Crawford, brother and sister to Mrs. Grant, the wife of the local vicar. The Crawfords visit Mansfield while Sir Thomas is in Antigua on rather murky business involving his plantations. Henry quickly becomes the favorite of both Julia and Maria, even though Maria is already engaged to the idiotic but very rich Mr. Rushworth, while Mary sets her sights on securing the affections of Edmund Bertram. During the first part of the book, there are two important scenes. One is the visit of the whole company of young people to Sotherton, the Rushworth estate, during which Henry Crawford pursues his developing affair with Maria. The other is the plan to put on a play in Mansfield, a plan that both Edmund and Fanny object to for various reasons. In the end, the plan is foiled by Sir Thomas' return, but these events put the theme of acting at the forefront.

The remainder of the story focuses on Henry's plan to make Fanny Price fall in love with him, and Fanny's resistance to his courtship. Eventually, Henry actually does fall in love with Fanny and proposes marriage, which Fanny rejects, out of distrust of his character. The other thread of the story is the developing romance between Mary Crawford and Edmund Bertram; Edmund is infatuated with Mary, but she is firmly opposed to the notion of being married to a clergyman, and is continually trying to seduce him away. When Fanny rejects him, Henry runs away with Maria, who by now is married to Rushworth, and this is the final blow to Edmund's inclination toward Mary. At first despondent, Edmund gradually realizes that Fanny makes a better minister's wife than Mary ever could have, and they marry.

Tony Tanner has pointed out that *Mansfield Park* was written near the end of the Napoleonic Wars, during a time of tumultuous change and serious threats to Britain. The threats that Austen identifies in the novel, however, were not the obvious threats to England's stability and peace—French invasions, Jacobins spying, and the like. Rather, she sees a threat embodied in a particular way of life, one that detaches moral principle from good breeding and mannerliness. That distinction is made explicit in the book during a conversation among Mary, Fanny, and Edmund in Part I. Edmund has insisted that the clergy shape the manners of a nation, but Mary does not believe it. Edmund responds:

> "With regard to their influencing public manners, Miss Crawford must misunderstand me, or suppose I mean to call them the arbiters of good breeding, the regulators of refinement and courtesy, the masters of the ceremonies of life. The *manners* I speak of, might rather be called *conduct*, perhaps, the result of good principle."

With regard to "refinement and courtesy," the Crawfords are without equal in the book. But that does not mean they conduct themselves according to good principles, which is the true meaning of "good manners." Fanny's comments elsewhere on the variety of nature apply here: it is wondrous that the same (English) soil and the same sun should produce "plants differing in the first rule and law of their existence." The first rule of existence for the Crawfords is quite different from that of the other characters.

This distinction between good breeding and good principles is developed and broadened in connection with two other main themes. As mentioned above, the first of these is acting. A central scene in the book is the home theatrical production that the young people plan during Sir Thomas' absence, over the objections of Edmund (at least initially) and Fanny. (This is one of the main charges against Fanny—she is a prude because she is so resolute in condemning a harmless entertainment. I shall return to this point below.) But the acting theme is pervasive. Henry is a natural actor on stage, and a public reader of considerable power. Even when Fanny is trying to resist his advances, she cannot help but be fascinated by his reading of a passage from Shakespeare. Henry is a wonderful actor because he is *always* acting. Fanny recognizes this from the beginning—he trifles, he flirts, at every moment he is playing a part—but, importantly, it is never the *same* part twice. That makes him charming, not least to many readers; but we as readers are supposed to be learning to see through his play-acting to search instead, as Fanny does, for strong principles and upright character, for some semblance of a permanent role beneath the Protean exterior.

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The second related theme is a geographic one. Space almost plays the role of a character in the book. Not only do certain towns have important thematic associations, but the living space has a subtle influence on character. Fanny's life is divided between two locations. Early in the novel, she moves from her family's home in Portsmouth to live with her uncle and aunt Bertram at Mansfield Park. Her large family lived in cramped housing, and Fanny is at first overwhelmed by the size of everything at Mansfield:

> The grandeur of the house astonished, but could not console her. The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease; whatever she touched she expected to injure, and she crept about in constant terror of something or other; often retreating towards her own chamber to cry; and the little girl who was spoken of in the drawing-room when she left at night, as seeming so desirably sensible of her peculiar good fortune, ended every day's sorrows by sobbing herself to sleep.

To make the Park a livable space, Fanny sets up a little "nest of comforts" in the East room, where she retreats to read and think. Even there, the fact that she is marginal to Mansfield Park is emphasized by the fact that Mrs. Norris allows no fire in the room.

Fanny eventually adjusts to the space of Mansfield, and this is most dramatically evident during her return trip to visit her family in Portsmouth in Book 3:

> Fanny was almost stunned. The smallness of the house, and the thinness of the walls, brought every thing so close to her, that, added to the fatigue of her journey, and all her recent agitation, she hardly knew how to bear it. *Within* the room all was tranquil enough, for Susan having disappeared with the others, there were soon only her father and herself remaining; and he taking out a newspaper—the accustomary loan of a neighbor, applied himself to studying it, without seeming to recollect her existence. The solitary candle was held between himself and the paper, without any reference to her possible convenience; but she had nothing to do, and was glad to have the light screened from her aching head, as she sat in bewildered, broken, sorrowful contemplation.
>
> She was at home.

Space may be cramped, but she is as distant from everyone as she ever was as a child at Mansfield. The only light is the candle held by her father, and she is screened from it by her father's newspaper. Instead of creating a circle of light in which two might sit, the light illumines only one.

Fanny's story is symbolized by this move from Portsmouth to Mansfield and back. She comes from the chaos and disorderliness of Portsmouth, and is formed into a young woman by Mansfield. Mansfield has the classic English virtues of repose, quietness, and stoic endurance. It is a country place in contrast to the bustling port city of Portsmouth. It takes the raw material of a Portsmouth and transforms it into a noble woman. The influence of place on character and even appearance is highlighted by Fanny's contemplation of her mother's looks during their walk to church:

> Her poor mother now did not look so very unworthy of being Lady Bertram's sister as she was but too apt to look. It often grieved her to the heart—to think of the contrast between them—to think that where nature had made so little difference, circumstances should have made so much, and that her mother, as handsome as Lady Bertram, and some years her junior, should have an appearance so much more worn and faded, so comfortless, so slatternly, so shabby.

That was Fanny's future, but for the intervention of Mansfield Park. To this extent, the novel could be seen as a celebration of the values of the English nobility.

But all is not well at the Park either, and that is so largely because a third location is also thematically significant—London. Henry and Mary Crawford come to Mansfield Park from London, and bring London with them. London is the maker of manners, the Hollywood of early-nineteenth-century England, the pacesetter for all things fashionable—or so the Crawfords think. Mary cannot wait to get back to London, but in the meantime, she and her brother help to set up an outpost of London manners at Mansfield. The Crawfords desire for entertainment, their need for amusement, their impatience with old ways, and their eagerness always to be attempting some novelty infects the rest of the young people at Mansfield Park. Henry agrees to act because it is among those pleasures he has never had, and he talks persistently about "improvements" at Rushworth's Sotherton and even at Edmund's parish home in Thornton Lacey. London is a city of actors, full of people who, having no settled place in life, are constantly trying on some new role. One dimension of the conflict of the novel lies here: Who is to be the maker of manners? London? Or the Church?

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Individualism arises from the detachment of breeding from true manners—symbolized by acting and by the influence of London values on the wealthy inhabitants of the Park. One of the most profound aspects of Austen's novel is her rich and detailed depiction of two perfect individualists. Henry is thought plain by everyone, until his charming and flirtatious ways, as well as his large income, begin to inflame Maria's and Julia's imagination. Only Fanny remains convinced that he is quite plain. Mary is pretty and lively, and shows an immediate interest in Tom Bertram, though she shortly shifts attention to his brother Edmund. Henry's manners are so good that Mrs. Grant, his sister, imputes to him all other good qualities, and, though initially finding him "plain and black," the Bertram sisters are so taken by his manners that they decide that he is exceedingly good-looking. "Manners" here should be taken in the sense of flirtatious attentions, which Henry bestows in great measure. Henry's "manners" in one sense are bad: he does not conduct himself well. But he is so adept at playing social roles that his manners in another sense please everyone—everyone but the perceptive Fanny, who takes time to look and think.

Henry's behavior does not flow from or produce order and decorum; on the contrary, his conduct leads to continuous upheaval and chaos. Though elegant and rich, he is a Satan, who delights in the chaos that he causes. It is not merely that he has no "fixed role" and no "calling"; he refuses to recognize the "fixed fate" of others, and attempts to seduce them from their vocations. During one of his early conversations with his sister, he says that he prefers the engaged Maria Bertram to her younger sister Julia:

> "An engaged woman is always more agreeable than a disengaged. She is satisfied with herself. Her cares are over, and she feels that she may exert all her powers of pleasing without suspicion. All is safe with a lady engaged; no harm can be done."

This turns the purpose of an engagement upside down; engagement does not free the engaged woman to flirt without suspicion, but limits her relations with other men. Henry would turn engagement into disengagement.

Henry's delight in chaos is even more explicit later, when he reflects on the fun the young people all had planning the play:

> "I shall always look back on our theatricals with exquisite pleasure. There was such an interest, such an animation, such a spirit diffused! Everybody felt it. We were all alive. There was employment, hope, solicitude, bustle, for every hour of the day. Always some little objection, some little doubt, some little anxiety to be got over. I never was happier."

Fanny silently condemns him: "Never happier than when behaving so dishonorably and unfeelingly!—Oh! what a corrupted mind!"

Another important dimension of Henry's individualism is evident in a conversation later in the book, which significantly takes place during a game of "speculation." Sir Thomas first begins to discern Henry's attention to Fanny, and speculates about their future relationship; Fanny speculates about life at Mansfield after Edmund has left to take up his pastoral charge at Thornton Lacey; and Henry indulges in speculations of his own, mainly about the "improvements" that could be made to Edmund's future home. Edmund will be satisfied to give the home "the air of a gentleman's residence," but Henry is not content with such minimal improvements:

> "You may raise it into a *place*. From being the mere gentleman's residence, it becomes, by judicious improvement, the residence of a man of education, taste, modern manners, good connections. All this may be stamped on it; and that house receive such an air as to make its own be set down as a great land-holder of the parish, by every creature traveling the road."

Henry is still insisting on "improvements" that would make Edmund's pastoral home into something other than it is. More than that, Henry is still conspiring with his sister, in this case not to snare Fanny but to snare Edmund. While Henry speaks, Mary has been speculating about going with Edmund to his new home, but is shocked when she is "no longer able, in the picture she had been forming of a future Thornton, to shut out the church, sink the clergyman, and see only the respectable, elegant, modernized, and occasional residence of a man of independent fortune." Henry and Mary are interested in the parish home at Thornton only so long as they can remove the parish.

Even after he has declared his intention to settle down and marry Fanny, Henry does not grasp the significance of that decision. This point is again made in a conversation dealing with Edmund's calling. After Henry has read a passage from Shakespeare to good effect, he and Edmund discuss the importance of clerical reading. Edmund agrees that "distinctness and energy" in reading "may have weight in recommending the most solid truths." But Henry's treatment of

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the subject reduces liturgical reading and preaching to another form of acting:

> "A sermon, well delivered, is more uncommon even than prayers well read. A sermon, good in itself, is no rare thing. It is more difficult to speak well than to compose well; that is, the rules and tricks of composition are oftener an object of study. A thoroughly good sermon, thoroughly well delivered, is a capital gratification. I can never hear such a one without the greatest admiration and respect, and more than half a mind to take orders and preach myself. There is something in the eloquence of the pulpit, when it is really eloquence, which is entitled to the highest praise and honor."

Sermonizing is another "role" that Henry would dearly love to play (since it would be new), so long as he could preach only to educated congregations. And not too often: preaching occasionally would suit, but "not for a constancy; it would not do for a constancy." But constancy, perseverance, a long obedience in one direction—this, of course, is precisely the difference between acting a role and accepting a role as a vocation. When Henry realizes that Fanny has noted his objection to "constancy," Fanny replies: "I thought it a pity you did not always know yourself as well as you seemed to do at that moment." Henry is addicted to novelty and will try anything new because it is new.

Mary Crawford is the female version of her brother, an actress and opportunist. Her character is established in part by contrast with Fanny. One particularly striking example is found in Book 2 (chapter 22), during a conversation in which Fanny rhapsodizes on the beauties of evergreens. Fanny is commenting on the wonderful changes that have taken place in the grounds at Mansfield Park, and this leads her into an astonished meditation on memory:

> "How wonderful, how very wonderful the operations of time, and the changes of the human mind! . . . If any one faculty of our nature may be called *more* wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient—at others, so bewildered and so weak—and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond control!—we are to be sure a miracle every way—but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out."

This is a striking statement in many ways: it is a celebration of memory worthy of Augustine, whose *Confessions* remains the classic on the subject. The "past finding out" is clearly a biblical or liturgical reference that indicates that Fanny is attributing the mystery of memory to God. But the most striking thing about this statement is Mary's reaction: "Miss Crawford, untouched and inattentive, had nothing to say." Not only does Mary have no sense of the beauty of the creation or the wonders of the human mind. She simply has no memory; she is all and always new. An actor needs no memory of a past, since he can always adopt a new past at will; an individualist wants no past, since having a past would limit his choice of new roles in the present.

The Crawfords are also individualists in another, more subtle, but profound sense. In all her novels, Austen displays her assumption that moral life is always lived in community. We need others to guide and teach us, and several of Austen's novels hinge on the ability of a woman to find a suitable mentor (Emma finds Knightley, Catherine Morland finds Henry Tilney). Living in community also means recognizing that our actions are not our own, but always affect others. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguished between different sorts of action on the basis of what they produce outside the actors:

> Production (*poesis*) is different from action (*praxis*). . . and so the reasoned state that is capable of action is also different from that which is capable of production. Hence neither is included in the other; because action is not production, nor production action.

Though this seems innocent, it has tremendously broad implications. For Aristotle, ethics deals with action and not with production, and this means that the whole realm of arts and economic activity is outside the strict boundaries of the ethical. But the distinction rests on a fundamental mistake—namely, that our actions can be confined to ourselves, that we can engage in *praxis* without producing *anything* outside ourselves. However Aristotelian Austen was in other respects, she implicitly rejects Aristotle's distinction between *praxis* (actions whose effects remain with the actor) and *poesis* (actions whose effects go beyond the actor), for she knows that every action is "poetic."

Henry and Mary Crawford do not recognize the inherent poetry of life. They are individualists in the sense that they follow their own desires regardless of

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what authorities say or do. When Sir Thomas is away on business, they take part in a theatrical production, and in fact press for it, even though they are warned that the master of the house would disapprove, and even over the initial objections of Edmund, who is responsible for managing the house in his father's absence. More subtly, they have no sense that their actions have consequences beyond the individual. When Henry runs away with Maria, now Mrs. Rushworth, Mary Crawford is still hoping that Edmund will want to marry her. She is utterly insensible to the fact that Henry's scandal might affect *her* in any way.

This brings us to what is perhaps *the* central critical judgment against *Mansfield Park*—Fanny Price. In Whit Stillman's intriguingly Austenesque film, *Metropolitan*, Tom Townsend, the young man from across town who has been befriended by the group of debutantes and preppies, is astonished when Audrey Rouget, the leading female character, reveals that she enjoys *Mansfield Park*. Everyone knows, Tom says, that *Mansfield Park* is the worst novel Jane Austen wrote, and nobody likes the book's heroine, Fanny Price. Audrey, the moral center of the film and very much a Fanny Price character herself, protests simply, "I like Fanny Price." It is later revealed that Tom has never read *Mansfield Park*, or anything else by Jane Austen for that matter. He prefers to read critics. At Audrey's urging, Tom eventually reads some Austen and is delighted with it.

Tom certainly had his choice of critics to support his hostility to *Mansfield Park* and Fanny Price. To be sure, *Mansfield Park* has not always been as sharply criticized as it is today. During Austen's lifetime, it vied with *Pride and Prejudice* as Austen's best-loved novel. Even today, Tony Tanner perceptively (and, in my judgment, accurately) calls *Mansfield Park* one of the "most profound novels" of the nineteenth century. Yet the novel, and its heroine, have endured sharp attacks. Lord David Cecil said that Fanny was "a little wooden, a little charmless, and rather a prig." Kingsley Amis was vicious: Fanny is "a monster of complacency and pride." Another saw her as "the most terrible incarnation we have of the female prig-pharisee," and C. S. Lewis found little to admire: Fanny has "nothing except rectitude of mind; neither passion, nor physical courage, nor wit, nor resource." Others have suggested that Fanny makes a fatal mistake in rejecting the vivacious, interesting, and very rich Henry Crawford in favor of the dull and stiff clergyman Edmund Bertram.

These attacks on Fanny show that their authors are as incapable of seeing her qualities as Mrs. Norris is, and indeed incapable of following Austen's clear directions for judging Fanny. It is often pointed out that of all of Austen's heroines, Fanny is one of only two (Anne Elliot is the other) who is not treated with irony, who does not make any serious misjudgment, whose behavior is always supported by the narrator. Elizabeth Bennet willfully misjudges Darcy, Emma misjudges everything, Catherine Morland is for most of *Northanger Abbey* too ignorant to form judgments, and even the sensible Elinor Dashwood collects enough mistakes to fill a small cupboard. Unless we are to suspect Austen of a hyper-ironic stance where Austen's *lack* of irony toward Fanny is a way of reinforcing irony, then we should accept at face value that Austen considers Fanny morally and intellectually exemplary.

To be sure, Fanny—physically weak, easily fatigued, often painfully shy and backward, with little wit—suffers in many respects by comparison to the other characters in the book. She is indeed an unusual heroine. Mary Crawford is thoroughly her brother's sister, full of wit and life and sparkle, a secular angel who charms Edmund Bertram by playing the harp. Julia and Maria Bertram, Edmund's sisters, are more accomplished than Fanny. Of the male characters, Edmund is surely the least immediately attractive. Not only Henry, but Tom Bertram, Edmund's wastrel older brother, and John Yates, the fervent actor, seem more interesting. Rushworth, who marries Maria, is a dolt cut from the same cloth as Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, but his very doltishness makes him fun to read about. In such a company, Edmund and Fanny are definitely not the standouts.

Yet given Austen's clear signals that they are the most moral and the central characters in the book, we have to say that this contrast is deliberate, and, further, that critics who side with the Crawfords against Edmund and Fanny are falling into the same trap as those Blakean critics who think that Milton was on the devil's side without knowing it. No doubt other characters are more immediately and superficially brilliant—but that is just the point. Austen wants our judgments about her characters to be shaped by the *principles* they display, not by their ability to charm. Charm deceives, and many are the critics who are taken in by it. Fanny's weakness and immobility are also part of the point. She shares much with classic Christian heroines like Constance in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale," who are heroines of *perseverance*. When Fanny refuses to marry Henry, these are precisely the issues in play. She distrusts Henry's character and his principles, and her heart is already committed to Edmund. Consistent with this perseverance, Fanny spends much of the novel in a single location, Mansfield Park, while many of the other characters come and go, and in several scenes, Fanny sits in the center of a swirl of activi-

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ty. This is not a fault. Her very *immobility*, her stillness in a world running after vanity, makes her a heroine. She has a fixed fate, and she accepts it with gratitude. As she says during the controversy over the theatrical production, "I cannot act." She is a still point in a turning world.

Edmund Bertram is also a man with a "fixed fate," an assigned role. He is destined to be a clergyman, much to the astonishment of Mary Crawford, who thinks that clergymen are "nothing." Several of the key conversations in the novel are concerned with the issue of calling, the role of the clergy in the nation, and the contrast between the clergy of London and the clergy in the rest of England. The quotation from Edmund above is part of his defense of the indispensability of the Church for the health of the nation, and the illness that the upper classes of the novel are suffering is symbolized by the neglected and vacant chapel at Rushworth's Sotherton. Mary expresses the modern secularist mind-set: When told that morning prayers have been discontinued at Sotherton, she smiles and says, "Every generation has its improvements." Improvements again!

Edmund's calling lends an almost allegorical tone to the story. Edmund, the future guardian of morals, is attracted to the flashy novelty of Mary Crawford of London, and fails for some time to see her true character. Choosing this temptress would lead him far from his calling and, because the clergy are the protectors of morals, would contribute by omission to the decline of English morals. Eventually, however, he chooses the modest and moral Fanny Price. He is set up to choose between Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly, between the true Church and the false. (If there is a meta-irony in *Mansfield Park*, it is not that Austen secretly mocks Fanny; it is rather that Austen, the ironist, the realist, the literalist, is in the end Bunyan's blood-sister.)

As noted above, when Austen talked about the purpose and theme of *Mansfield Park*, she said she was writing on the subject of ordination, with the related themes of vocation or calling. That referred of course to Edmund's calling to be a clergyman and the temptation to abandon that vocation when Mary appears. The challenge before Edmund is to persevere in the role that he has been ordained to fill, and to resist the temptation to become an actor-individualist. And this is the same temptation that confronts Fanny. She has been "ordained" to love Edmund, and she must persevere through persistent temptations from Henry Crawford. Austen brings the two "vocations" of marriage and ordination into direct connection. While everyone is eagerly awaiting the Mansfield ball, Edmund has his mind on other things, being "deeply occupied in the consideration of the two important events now at hand, which were to fix his fate in life—ordination and matrimony." If there is allegory here, it cuts both ways: not only must the shepherd resist the allurements of the false woman, but the bride must resist the advances of a charming but ultimately scurrilous suitor. Both must be faithful to their "fixed fates," unmoved by tempter or temptress.

"Vocation" is set in direct contrast to "acting." Both have to do with taking on or playing "roles," but the meaning of "role" in the two cases is quite different. An actor might adopt many different roles, none of which defines who he is. Actors have no "fixed fate" in life. Thus, in contrast to the "actors" of the story, Edmund is "called" to a particular "vocation." Though, as he emphasizes to Mary, he has chosen to pursue the ministry, in a more profound sense he has *been* chosen. And his role is determined not by the whims of the moment but by assuming a particular position within English society, a position established by the ritual of ordination, which determines the role he is going to play. He is not free to choose another "role" tomorrow. For a called man or woman, his or her role is not a mask that can be removed at will. The mask sticks so closely to his face as to be permanent. The health of Mansfield, of England, depends on which path is chosen, on whether the next generation chooses to be "actors" or to accept "ordination."

Both Fanny and Edmund are tempted to give up their "fixed fates" and become "actors," and this is symbolized by their day at Sotherton. The geography of the walk at Sotherton is important. The immediate grounds of the house are bounded by a wall and a gate, and then the "wilderness," a wooded and wilder area. During this walk in the "wilderness," Miss Crawford attempts to dissuade Edmund about his clerical calling. It is a kind of temptation scene, in a garden-wilderness, with Mary herself as the forbidden fruit. Austen adds another touch to indicate just how dangerous a position Edmund is in: the entire conversation takes place off the "great path" in the "serpentine" path of the wilderness walk. Edmund is tempted to give up his clerical "role" for another; he is tempted to become an actor, to leave the great path that is fated for him.

The denouement of the book comes through a series of letters, which completely unveil the Crawfords as the unthinking individualists that they are. When Tom Bertram becomes seriously ill, Mary writes to express the hope that the Bertram fortune will now fall into Edmund's more deserving possession. She is willing to accept a clergyman husband, so long as he is sufficiently wealthy and potentially stylish. Even when Henry runs away with Maria Rushworth, Mary thinks that there is no barrier to her continuing connection with

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Edmund. Mary describes Henry and Maria as "foolish," and the mildness of that judgment offends Edmund: "No harsher name than folly given—so voluntarily, so freely, so coolly to canvass it!—no reluctance, no horror, no feminine—shall I say? no modest loathings!—This is what the world does." Newly ordained pastor that he is, Edmund is surely using "world" in its fullest biblical sense; worldliness leads only to disaster.

The tour at Sotherton is also important for seeing how Austen diagnoses the ills at Mansfield Park, for seeing how Austen treats the sources of disruptive individualism. As Maria says with pride, the town church is well situated at a distance from the house: "The church spire is reckoned remarkably handsome. I am glad the church is not so close to the Great House as often happens in old places. The annoyance of the bells must be terrible." The church is acknowledged only for its contribution to the aesthetics of the town; so long as it does not intrude too closely on the life of the Great House, all is well. Every generation has its improvements, as Mary might say. Similarly, the chapel is remarkable for being "fitted up as you see it, in James the Second's time," and because at one time "the linings and cushions of the pulpit and family-seat were only purple cloth." In short, "it is a handsome chapel." And that is all.

It is in this chapel that the first conversation about clerical office begins. Fanny believes that a family at regular prayer is part of "what such a household should be," but Mary disagrees: "It is safer to leave people to their own devices on such subjects." Even in politics, Mary is an individualist, defending liberty of conscience in religious matters. She is shocked, then, to learn that Edmund intends to be ordained, and even more shocked that he should have *chosen* the Church as a profession: "A clergyman is nothing," she says, referring to his social standing. Edmund gives a spirited defense of the essential place of the clergy in the nation:

> "A clergyman cannot be high in state or fashion. He must not head mobs, or set the tone in dress. But I cannot call that situation nothing, which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind, individually or collectively considered, temporally and eternally—which has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently the manners which result from their influence. No one here can call the *office* nothing. If the man who holds it is so, it is by the neglect of his duty, by forgoing its just importance, and stepping out of his place to appear what he ought not to appear."

Mary cannot believe that the clergy have such weight, since one sees any of them "so rarely out of his pulpit." But here the contrast of London and the rest of England comes into play, as Edmund insists that a proper clergyman is not merely a pulpiteer:

> "A fine preacher is followed and admired; but it is not in fine preaching only that a good clergyman will be useful in his parish and his neighborhood, where the parish and neighborhood are of a size capable of knowing his private character, and observing his general conduct, which in London can rarely be the case."

Several things are happening in this conversation. Clearly, Austen's sympathies are with Edmund, who speaks in tones not unlike his great namesake, Edmund Burke. Edmund's choice is for a high calling, one that does indeed direct the manners and conduct of the nation. Sotherton is "improving," and closing the chapel is one of these improvements. But a house so improved is destined to fall, and Sotherton will fall resoundingly before the end of the novel. Moreover, Mary's worldliness, her sense of being on the cutting edge of social evolution, is undercut here with sharp irony. She believes that in knowing London she knows the world: "The metropolis, I imagine, is a pretty fair sample of the rest," and that means if a clergyman is nothing in London he is nothing anywhere. On the contrary, Edmund argues, London is a very small and very special world; knowing London does not give Mary knowledge of the world. It is provincial and parochial. Especially here, the thematic conflict of the novel takes center stage: London versus the Church.

Of course, the perversion of the nobility at Mansfield Park is not altogether London's fault. Even before Henry and Mary arrive, it is clear that something is amiss. Good breeding and good conduct have already been separated, as Sir Thomas has singularly failed to pass on his own sense of propriety and morals to his children. Maria and Julia are well educated "in everything but disposition," and though they mock Fanny for not knowing the "principal rivers in Russia," they are "entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility," all subjects in which Fanny excels. Tom, the eldest Bertram, is even worse, a ne'er-do-well who has none of his father's sense of responsibility for the moral climate of the Bertram house or for the repute of the Bertram name. In part, Austen is focusing attention on the collapsing morals of the upper classes of England. *Mansfield Park*'s cast of characters is socially much higher than the characters in Austen's other novels. Henry and Mary have been

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exceedingly rich for some years, Rushworth has £12,000, the Bertrams have no monetary wants or cares. Put energetic young people in a house, remove adult restraint, stir in vast sums of money: that, Austen thinks, is a recipe for trouble.

Sir Thomas recognizes too that "this is what the world does." He recognizes the failures of his parenting of his daughters:

> Something had been wanting *within*, or time would have worn away much of its ill effect. He feared that principle, active principle, had been wanting, that they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice. They had been instructed theoretically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice.

Like the Rushworth family, Sir Thomas had, symbolically if not in fact, discontinued the prayers that make a house, and left the chapel disused and empty. Without a guardian, without a pastor or guide, his daughters had fallen in with "how the world goes."

Nearly seduced by the world, nearly led astray by the world to abandon his vocation and become a mere actor, Edmund in the end accepts his calling. "I cannot act," Fanny says, and indeed she cannot, and neither can Edmund. In the end, they both accept, gratefully, their ordained roles, their "fixed fate."

Austen was not an unthinking defender of traditional social order. Not uncommonly, her heroines are upwardly mobile, particularly through the agency of matrimony. Yet she sensed the corrosive effects of individualism, and her uncanny intelligence and attention to the details of social surface enabled her to give us one of literature's sharpest portraits of this emerging reality. That she also recognized the absence and failure of the Church in combating this decay makes her a public theologian to reckon with. FT

The First Art

The rough wood splits and yaws
worn smooth in places
where hands, heads, buttocks, feet
of the crucified before Christ
rubbed and writhed and rested.
A well-used cross,
borrowed, not bought.
Nothing new,
not even the nails.
The ropes rented,
the spear in the side plagiarized.
All rehearsed ten thousand times,
revised ten thousand places,
until we got it right.

Angela O'Donnell

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Gadamer & the Light of the Word

Edward Tingley

It is reasonable to be dubious about biographies of philosophers, even when they are good. For what, after all, is the life of a philosopher? How much a novelist lived the events he or she wrote about (did Dostoevsky know a Zosima?) seems a natural point of curiosity, irrelevant though it may be to the novels. But could you wonder that about a philosopher? Philosophy concerns ideas, and do ideas have an obscure connection to everyday life? What, for example, can the life of the fellow with the wool ties and Teutonic humor tell us about what was most vital and central to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the German philosopher who died almost two years ago, on March 14, 2002, at the remarkable age of 102. As Gadamer himself noted, philosophers "are thinkers and their identity is to be found in the continuity of their thought"—"biography" is thus "marginal."

Nevertheless, readers of Gadamer might hesitate here. Gadamer himself described his introduction to ideas as a young man in the following terms: "It was 'life-philosophy,' above all, . . . that was taking hold of our whole feeling for life." He was referring to the "chasm" that had opened up in the nineteenth century between "academic" philosophy and "worldly" philosophy, meaning a thinking that butted into life—the legacy of Pascal, Schopenhauer, and Kierkegaard. Forty years later, his mature philosophy would join that tradition, as philosophy with a special connection to life.

Gadamer dubbed his work "philosophical hermeneutics" to distinguish it from hermeneutics proper: that is, biblical exegesis and, in a broader sense, interpretation itself (as opposed to reflection upon it). But philosophy was not its point; philosophy was its means. The point was life, always the affair at which Gadamer's hermeneutics was aimed. Though you cannot gather it from his academic style, life is the stage for Gadamer's work the way life looms behind the music of Gustav Mahler (of whom Gadamer was fond). A Mahler symphony seems to want to guide you through birth, death, joy, melancholy, and illness in an altered frame of mind. Gadamer doesn't offer that guidance: only the voice of Being can give it. But you have to hear that voice, and Gadamer wants to help you to hear it. "What I am describing is the mode of the whole human experience of the world. I call this experience hermeneutical." But there has been "a fateful change in the relationship of humans to the world." We have become masters. "We are not at all ready to hear things in their own being." That deafness means we cannot find our way home; it means a

HANS-GEORG GADAMER: A BIOGRAPHY.
By Jean Grondin.
Translated by Joel Weinsheimer.
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EDWARD TINGLEY *is an independent scholar who lives in Montreal, Canada.*

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fundamental "homelessness." Awakening us to the voice of Being was the issue of all Gadamer's work.

It is little wonder, then, that philosophy needed a new approach for such a project. Philosophy mired in "the bog of historicism," or "stranded in the shallows of epistemology," or eddying "in the backwater of logic" held no attraction for Gadamer. Philosophy as taught, he thought, had long ago been "forced out of the context of teaching and living"—which is to say, teaching for living, philosophy understood as "a life that poses the questions of the true and the good." That was the real issue: finding "a life to which one can say 'yes.'"

This issue could well be called the hermeneutic life, understood as a life that gives hermeneutics its proper place. Hermeneutics is "a mode of being"—a uniquely important form of experience without which we know nothing. Hermeneutics is, as theologian Fred Lawrence has put it, "a being-present-to-the-world constituted by meaning"—provided one stresses that Gadamer considered this to be "more than a mere manifestation of meaning." It is not just an increase in sense (sheer folly makes perfect sense, which is part of its attraction); it is entering into the presence of Being itself.

What kind of life does hermeneutics make possible? Gadamer never says—a fact that makes his own life a matter of some curiosity. Did he live the life he wished others to discover? Could one take Gadamer's life as an object lesson in hermeneutics?

Some people have done just that. In his review of Jean Grondin's recently translated biography of Gadamer, historian of philosophy Richard Wolin asked "how hermeneutics, as personified by Gadamer, fares under real-world conditions." His conclusion was curt: "Those who view Grondin's biography as a *conte morale* about how hermeneutics functions in times of duress are surely in for a major letdown." What kind of life is the hermeneutic life? A "horrible life," says Wolin.

For Wolin, hermeneutics is "a moral and political failure," for in the Nazi years it failed to help Gadamer make "ethically informed choices." Wolin adds Gadamer's name to the list of such compromised thinkers as Martin Heidegger, Gadamer's teacher, and Paul de Man, for twice assuming posts vacated by dismissed Jewish colleagues. The question is fair and the issues real: some moments of Gadamer's career would make anyone uneasy (was it really necessary to lecture on J. G. Herder in occupied Paris, telling captured French officers how "the German concept of the people—in contrast to the democratic slogans of the West—proves to have the power to create a new political and social order in an altered present"?). But there is spongy thinking behind Wolin's tough conclusion.

Take the Herder incident—what Wolin calls, "undoubtedly, Gadamer's greatest compromise with the Nazi regime." Anyone who reads the original version of Gadamer's lecture cannot miss its distinctive ambiguity. A defense of Herder's idea of the German *Volk*? Yes, but that involves *contrasting* the people with the state. Gadamer notes "the dangers the state machine represents for life in general," with its "suffocating soullessness" and its "false appearance of life," and he heads off any "false hubris" about "one's own present" ("the idea of a favored people [*Lieblingsvolk*]" is "untenable"). Wolin says that this simply played into Nazi ideology (which "never celebrated the idea of the 'state'"), but what of it? Everyone knew the presence of the state—anyone marked for pickup in the dead of night knew it wasn't the *people* at the door. Anyone can see that Gadamer was cleverly shredding—while on state business—the absurd pretense that the Nazi state *was* the people.

But simplicity mars even Wolin's thinking on the pivotal issue of compliance. In its full complexity, the question is not: Did Gadamer do anything that could be said to accommodate the Nazis? It is: Would it be better to remain pure, to protest and relinquish one's professorship, so that the university could fill up with real poison? Or, instead, sign the occasional declaration of allegiance to the regime and attend the odd reeducation camp so that one could go on teaching students real philosophy? Which would be right if you believed, as Gadamer did, that the decline of university education was one of the things that had made "possible" the "chaos of National Socialism"? There is ethical substance in both answers, it seems to me. It never appears to dawn on Wolin that career—the objective of continuing to teach—could have any but a selfish meaning. That is a very odd notion of teaching.

Grondin's book is essentially a narrative of academic life and intellectual contacts. On the question of fascism, however, the facts of Gadamer's career under the Nazis (covered by a quarter of the book) do not lead us to any dramatic or even noteworthy conclusions. At the same time, these details of career and connections tell us nothing at all about the hermeneutic life.

Grondin has done substantial archival work to settle what the book's jacket calls "the facts of Gadamer's life": upbringing, schooling, teachers, degrees, appointments, major publications, and other

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signal events (Gadamer's early illness, his two marriages, his arrest by East German police). Providing a wealth of information on the development of hermeneutic themes and intellectual parallels with thinkers Gadamer knew, it is a richly documented biography (though the typo in the opening sentence of chapter one, which gets Gadamer's birthday wrong, inspires doubts about precision). All of this information is not without a certain interest, but even someone like myself, unusually interested in the man, closes this book reflecting on Gadamer's epigraph to his own academic memoir of 1977, *Philosophical Apprenticeships*: "De nobis ipsis silemus"—about oneself one must keep silent. Perhaps there was more to that than just modesty.

Gadamer always counted the determination of sources and "the cataloguing of historical facts" of comparatively little importance. "Being well-informed," he said, "is not the same thing as being substantial." In this he was in full agreement with Heidegger, who disparaged "those who understand something only when they have situated it among historical influences, the pseudo-understanding of officious curiosity, that is, the avoidance of what is decisively important." These words, cited by Grondin himself, resonate uncomfortably with this biography.

Was Grondin's instinct sound? Is a genetic history of ideas a sure road to hermeneutics, as a form of *life-philosophy*? "The private sphere," he decided, "will remain excluded here insofar as it has no significance for the intellectual aspects [of] Gadamer's biography." One can learn much from this story of early development and "influential figures" that contributes to understanding Gadamer's work. (It seems clear, for instance, that the tension between Gadamer's view of *phronesis* [prudence] and the Thomistic view is due to the influence of Heidegger, who first made this concept meaningful to Gadamer in lectures of the 1920s.) But can "the biographical," conceived as a narrative of ideas, really give us a genuine "entry point to Gadamer's hermeneutics"—to an understanding Gadamer would call "substantial"?

Grondin has done an excellent job with a standard biography. It is just that in this case a standard biography—the sort you could write about almost any philosopher (Habermas or Derrida or Dr. Dimbulb)—seems a missed opportunity. Biography should be the perfect occasion to take account of the implicit connection between the hermeneutic life and the life Gadamer lived. A life in earshot of Being: that is the story you secretly long for when you think of a "life" of the founder of philosophical hermeneutics.

Of course, that would be a lot to ask for, given the serious gap between hermeneutics and philosophy as practiced and taught today—the breach between the Gadamer who told us that philosophy is "the conversation of the soul with itself" and the Gadamer the academy is equipped to bring us. You get a fair measure of that trouble (a veritable deafness to Gadamer) when you hear still-common judgments about *Truth and Method*, his masterwork. "Never systematically clarified in terms of a fully developed concept of truth." Well, perhaps that's because, according to Gadamer, truth is not something we weigh in theories. "The possession of criteria" is not "more important than truth," he wrote. "Knowing is a direct intuition," a matter of "divine grace." Truth, for Gadamer, is a word spoken to us by Being. And if that is the message, how do you imagine its messenger fares in the academy?

Gadamer's current place in philosophy depends very largely on the effort to smooth his work into continuity with a thinking he gave up on early. It is not "sterile epistemological problems" that matter but rather "the heritage of Socrates," the encounter with the good. Can philosophy truly have repudiated that? Look at it in a Kierkegaardian way. "Wherever God is present," wrote Kierkegaard, "progress will be recognizable by mounting demands, by the cause becoming harder. On the other hand, the human way is always recognizable by matters being made easier; and that is called progress." On the one hand you have challenge, Socrates, things becoming harder; on the other, modern philosophy and the hunt for easily consumed theories of truth.

Kierkegaard was saying that if a philosophy bears a message fit to assist in building the Kingdom of God, then something in that message will hurt the heads or abrade the sensitivities of ordinarily sinful people—folks like us. An easier way of understanding the given philosopher (Socrates or Gadamer) will always be available—other ways of thinking that feel comfortable will practically beg to include him, and the philosophy will be shoehorned into them. Yet nothing about this will seem lax or forced, since these "positive" interpretations will rapidly accumulate into whole schools of thought. We will have resounding agreement about what the philosophy says, pretty much proving that the riches of the thinker have been expertly reaped. Yet they will not have been, for to reap them would be *hard*.

Gadamer is telling us something hard, something that can indeed assist in building the Kingdom of God. But you won't hear it in what the experts tell you about Gadamer's greatness—for instance (to sample recent tributes), that Gadamer has revealed

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"the structure of hermeneutic understanding" and "described the way in which human beings come to terms with themselves." Since Gadamer's thought stresses conversation, philosophers are inclined to present him as the great theorist of that phenomenon—in effect, a theorist of the everyday, the comfortable (since we know how to converse and do it all the time). They tell us that when Gadamer writes, "I sought to ground the linguisticality of our orientation to the world in conversation," he is saying we are linguistic to the bone and construct our world by talking about everything around us (a self-image with which we rest easy, says Kierkegaard). Or they tell us that Gadamer emphasizes dialogue to single it out as the great paradigm of all properly human relations (and, again, no philosophy is more acceptable to us than the theoretical coming-together of the human race). All of this *may* be Gadamer's greatness for those crowding Kierkegaard's "human" highway, but where in these genteel formulas is the Gadamer I know?

Where is the hammer that Gadamer has so painstakingly fashioned: that perfect tool for cracking the walls that shut out the truth? That is hermeneutics: it frees me to live, whereas the hermeneutics of the academy is no tool at all. The "accomplishment of Gadamer's major opus, *Truth and Method*," is not that it is "the Bible of modern-day hermeneutics." Gadamer's accomplishment has everything to do with Kierkegaard's "mounting demands."

Truth and Method is "one of the great philosophical works of the twentieth century" because it leads us where the modern mind—"which as a matter of fact is in a hopeless impasse," notes Gadamer—will not go, resists going with every thought, yet absolutely needs to go.

What is it that the modern head is not prepared to hear? It is that Being is our partner. Being is speaking to us. And Being will lead us home. Ever since the publication of *Truth and Method* in 1960, that is exactly what Gadamer has been saying. And, for perfectly obvious reasons, that has meant the quiet refurbishment of hermeneutics by contemporary philosophy, for philosophy is precisely a specialty that stops short of all intimations of mystical relation. "If you want that Gadamer," it says, "take a right turn to the theology department." But *Truth and Method* opens with a verse of Rilke on the "eternal partner" and "the great bridge-building of God" for good reason: "establishing the ontological background of the hermeneutical experience of the world" was the work's ultimate objective. Gadamer was telling us about the ever-present communication of Being—and he was doing it as a philosopher, for he was neither a theologian nor even a Christian.

That is one of the things we are indebted to Grondin for clarifying. Is Gadamer's philosophy a disguised Christianity? Hardly—after reading Grondin the answer couldn't be clearer. Though Gadamer often presented himself as a Protestant and kept in touch with theology (he followed the Marburg theological controversies and was a fifteen-year veteran of Rudolf Bultmann's private reading circle), he put it bluntly: "I have no religious faith at all"—though he added, "I always say that with a certain amount of regret." He believed his chances for faith had been hurt by his father, the early loss of his mother, the air of unbelief in the Church of his youth, even the "terrible" liturgy and the modernized music (pitfalls he counted "inherent in Protestantism"). He professed what Plato called "the divine," joking that Catholicism favored Aristotle because Plato was too spiritual for it. Plato's "divine" may seem like nothing—a philosopher's god—but the more you know about Gadamer's sense of Being, the closer it brings you to your own God.

Most of the standard readings of Gadamer ignore the emphasis on the outcome of hermeneutics: the personal encounter with the voice of Being. Language is the route of "a return to the whole," "an experience of the whole and of ourselves in the whole." "It is through the Word that we overcome the abysmal ignorance about ourselves in which we live." "The light that causes everything to emerge in such a way that it is evident and comprehensible is the light of the word."

The task of philosophical hermeneutics was simple: to clear the mind of intellectual barriers to that light, constituted by habitual modern concerns like historical difference, aestheticism, the perfectibility of procedures. The history of thinking has only weakened our grasp of reality, which involves understanding our intimate relation with Being. Philosophy has only turned our backs to Being; so much for Plato's Cave. What is Being in a land lulled by the blue flicker of TV screens?

According to Gadamer, in philosophy we are talking about "the greatest of questions"—we are talking about "the question of 'Being.'" And this is a question that Being asks us. Whether it is called "*nous* or God," he writes, "either way it is ultimately what lies utterly outside us" that is our signpost in living. To live, we must trust in "the way of complete self-donation to what is outside, in which the seeker nevertheless finds himself."

The religious dimension of that message is unmistakable, and hardly an accident: Gadamer said that we have to understand understanding "in terms of reli-

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gious experience." All our "false paths of human self-understanding reach their true end only through divine grace." When we truly understand something, what occurs is "a 'taking part' in something, a participation that more closely resembles what takes place . . . in the believer who is faced with a religious message." As if to turn any still-listening philosopher against him, Gadamer identified the paradigm of understanding with "the mystical submersion of Christians."

Being is our conversation partner and language is its voice. In saying so, Gadamer wants us to accept something that makes no sense to the modern mind. Even Grondin, who has read Gadamer deeply (he is the French translator of *Truth and Method*), has written that in Gadamer's work the word "'ontological' is consistently used as a synonym for 'philosophical' and 'universal.'" (What, then, does Gadamer mean by "universal ontological significance"?) But *Truth and Method* moves steadily forward, past the preoccupation with the humanities, "horizons," the "historical and aesthetic consciousness," past conversation and language to its ultimate task, which is breaking down the "ontological prejudice" that modernity has housed in a thousand institutions. How will you grasp what Gadamer is saying if you are resolutely unprepared (as most philosophers are) to acknowledge the ontological mystery of a Being that speaks directly to us—that is, to our troubles, our innermost issues of identity and value?

It is worth the risk of isolating the gist of that message: God's answer to our deepest questions is before us. Or call it Being, if you prefer. Being is speaking to us—in effect, it hears our most intimate questions and holds out the answer. The questions that wring us with indecision, the agonizing dilemmas that we are helpless to resolve—in the hermeneutic life, these are questions that may be laid before Being.

Does a religious person need Gadamer to tell us that? Certainly not. But a religious person needs him as much as the secular person, because the modern Protestant or Catholic or Jew has plenty of trouble hearing God's voice. Gadamer alluded to "analogies" between the hermeneutic stance and prayer, but hermeneutics has something to teach us about prayer. Understanding Gadamer reveals how modern thinking has infiltrated even the notion of dialogue with God. In prayer God answers our questions, we are sure, but how does He do that? How does God speak to us? If I answer, "In Scripture," I merely respect modern boundaries. If I think of answered prayer as a message telegraphed direct to my heart, if I have no sense of the breadth of God, the ways in which God talks to me, then I have only a rudimentary sense of prayer, for, as Gadamer shows, God is talking to me all the time and I don't seem to know it. While the modern secular person dismisses Being altogether, the modern religious person meets Being only on consecrated ground: it is all deafness to Being, one way or the other.

Gadamer is one of the great philosophers of our age because, from the desiccation of the twentieth century, employing the resources of secular philosophy (still rhetorically rich), he could find a way to teach us how to hear the voice—how to converse with God, how to live in a world in which what is has asked us a question and awaits our reply. The ideas are essential, to be sure, but they are only a preliminary to the hermeneutic life.

Properly recombined, all the Gadamerian theses that philosophers single out for attention point toward a life in conversation with Being. Take language. To see language as "the element in which we live," or to say that our understanding of the world is "language-bound"—or, in his most famous formula, that "Being that can be understood is language"—does not mean simply that language is a medium in which we can connect with anything. It means that "in language the world itself presents itself." Language has put us in conversation with Being, and in such a way that we can receive the guidance to live fully.

Language is "outside us"; a word has *already* been spoken to us by Being. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In this statement, the prologue to the Gospel of John, Gadamer discovered "an idea that is not Greek and does more justice [than Greek ideas] to the *being of language*." We are talking here about the "miracle of language," the miracle of a presence that "asserts its own truth in being understood." We are talking about the "great experience in which what is reveals itself."

Gadamer stands out among philosophers for suggesting that the conversation partner with whom truth emerges is not necessarily another person. What speaks to us is not just a he or a she but also a book or a poem, and not just a book or a poem but the world around us—Being itself, through the poem. Gadamer singles out human dialogue only by way of analogy—because that is the paradigm we know best, the model that will teach us our proper relation to the world. "Whatever says something to us is like a person who says something." Gadamer wants us to hear "the dialogue that things carry on with us," see "the symbolic character that, hermeneutically regarded, belongs to all beings." In this, three Gadamerian themes are central: *finitude*, *openness*, and *application*.

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Finitude is disability, "the distinguishing feature of being human," the consequence of "a reality that limits and exceeds the omnipotence of reflection." "All human self-understanding is determined," says Gadamer, "by its inadequacy." "The Delphic command 'Know thyself' meant, 'Know that you are a man and no god,'" an insight that "stands as a warning before all illusions of mastery and domination." We must act when we do not know how to act.

Which is to say—now the second theme—we stand *open* to the directive that lies in what has been said to us. Openness, or placing oneself in the hands of otherness, is another "Kierkegaardian motif," recalled Gadamer, that "guided me from the beginning. According to Kierkegaard, it is the other who breaks into my ego-centeredness and gives me something to understand."

But openness has a dual quality. Before it is receptivity to the message in a text, it is receptivity to texts as such—to the *presence of the word* all around us. We must first be open to the word, to the presence of language in dialogue, poetry, and experience. When Gadamer stressed "the linguisticality of all understanding" he was extending hermeneutics beyond its traditional purview (works, art, people) *to all otherness*: to all that can address us through language, all that has the power to speak in conceptual form.

Openness is often misunderstood. It is not weakness, doing as one is told—what Wolin labeled "Gadamer's ethical 'conventionalism': the view that, instead of making waves, we should follow the rules and procedures of the existing social order." To be open is to *hear*—first, to hear that a word has been spoken; second, to hear what was said in it. We submit not to the *dictate in* but simply to the *saying of* what is said to us. We listen to all the words, suspending any dampening caveats about the character, intelligence, or reality of the "speaker."

But when Gadamer says that "we have the ability to open ourselves to the superior claim" of a conversation partner, he means that we can refuse to engage that ability—like a child who won't read the words before him, though he can. (Nothing is easier than ease, says Kierkegaard). "The central problem of hermeneutics" as an art of life is to "let something be said to us," doing the work of letting things speak. "We might well say that learning how to do this properly is a never-ending task laid upon each of us." Gadamer calls it the "task of application."

Application has to do with the way a message applies to our own lives. This is not a procedural move, something we *do* at some designated moment by "comparing the message to our situation." It is a symptom, as it were, of being open; following the words is also hearing the way they point to me (as often they will). "The way the interpreter belongs to his text is like the way the point from which we are to view a picture belongs to its perspective. It is not a matter of looking for this viewpoint and adopting it as one's standpoint. The interpreter . . . finds his point of view already given" in the words that are heard.

Discovering the word in our midst, following the words said, acknowledging how they point at you—anyone who achieves this "fundamental sort of openness" will occasionally find himself redirected by that experience alone. The encounter changes one's mind: "What is meaningful passes into one's own thinking on the subject." The process, says Gadamer, "is more a passion than an action." The new way of seeing "presses itself on us" as we listen. "We can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion."

In the hermeneutic life we are *finite*, *open*, and *reachable*; it is the power to recognize (not prove) the superiority of a message that is the saving grace of our finitude. Granted, we can misinterpret, lend credence to empty messages ("Understanding . . . always remains a risk")—but that's finitude, and there's no way around it. There is no chance for mastery in living, by working out what is properly credible on the basis of notions like demonstration, experiential tests, sufficient evidence, and so on—the fool's errands that modernity has sent us on, seeking a kind of legitimation that neither exists nor is needed. In life we will always have to go further than thinking like that can take us.

Critics such as Jürgen Habermas have objected to the way the person leading such a life stands open to domination—but that was Gadamer's point. Finitude means that we *will* be dominated; the only question is, by what? By the illusion of critical power that turns us from the source of truth, or by the eternal partner to whom we must open our hearing to find our way? In Gadamer we have a philosophical equivalent of the Gospels' link between childhood and conversion: "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Conversion is the relinquishing of illusory power: seeing that you are a child (with limited understanding) and listening, in your weakness, to what the father has to say.

One might say that this sounds like a pretty thin philosophy, this triple openness: stand ready to recognize a dialogue partner, hear the words spoken, see oneself in them. Fair enough. The power of what Gadamer is saying doesn't fully impress itself upon you until you see just what it means to achieve so "little" as the hermeneutic stance.

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Until you see hermeneutics working in the midst of a human life. For that we need autobiography.

Perhaps it was only autobiography, after all, that could show us a person living hermeneutically, open to Being, *dominated* by Being in the midst of personal finitude. For that we return to the Nazi period—not to Gadamer but to Viktor Frankl, founder of the psychiatric approach of logotheraphy. Well before that, in his thirties, Frankl faced a heart-rending decision that he found himself unable to resolve.

> Shortly before the United States entered World War II, I was called to the American Consulate in Vienna to receive my immigration visa. My old parents expected me to leave Austria as soon as the visa was given. However, at the last moment I hesitated: the question of whether I should leave my parents beset me. I knew that any day they could be taken to a concentration camp. Shouldn't I stay with them? While pondering this question I found that this was the type of dilemma which made one wish for a hint from Heaven. It was then that I noticed a piece of marble lying on a table at home. When I asked my father about it, he explained that he had found it on the site where the National Socialists had burned down the largest Viennese synagogue. My father had taken this marble piece home because it was a part of the tablets which contained the Ten Commandments. The piece showed one engraved and gilded Hebrew letter. My father explained that this letter is the abbreviation for only one of the Commandments. Eagerly I asked, "Which one is it?" The answer was: "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land." So I stayed with my father and my mother upon the land and decided to let the American visa lapse.

As the result of that decision, Frankl went with his parents to Theresienstadt and then Auschwitz.

Frankl had not prayed; he had simply yearned for help. Yet a *word* was delivered to him that overcame his weakness and marked his course—a course that, for all its horror, he never regretted (as he might well have regretted escape to America). No *person* gave Frankl that answer—indeed, you could scarcely say the vehicle was a *text*. It was a single Hebrew letter, a mere fragment of a solitary letterform. Yet it *was* a text, for it was full of the power of specific reference that makes language distinctive.

This was not animal entrails or starry convergences: Frankl was not free to play with the message or how it connected with his life; his place in the text was "already given." The Commandment signified by the Hebrew letter "*he*" simply *is* the command to honor parents. It touched his crisis as a matter of *fact*.

The hermeneutic stance is an openness to God, a living acknowledgement that in God's world it is God who decides how He will communicate with you. There is a radical implication in this: insignificance is thrown back at us, as a meaninglessness we impose upon the world. There is no more beautiful illustration of that than in the world's first autobiography, St. Augustine's *Confessions*—in the story of Augustine's conversion. The word that changed Augustine's life was a biblical command whose message it took no special hermeneutic sensitivity to hear: "Spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites"—what could be clearer? The point of interest, however, is the road that opened at a decisive moment in time between Augustine and that specific line of Scripture, just as one had opened between Frankl and the Fourth Commandment.

In a moment of spiritual anguish, Augustine had scarcely finished praying (begging God to end his attachment to the world) "when all at once I heard the singing voice of a child in a nearby house. . . . Again and again it repeated the refrain 'Take it and read, take it and read.'" You probably know the rest of the story (leaving the garden, taking up the book, reading "the first passage on which my eyes fell"). The path that, in answer to his prayer, God had instantly shown Augustine—the path leading from the garden to that verse—could only be seen with hermeneutic eyes. Which of *us* would have seen it? Who among us would hear the command in that song as *any* kind of imperative? How many other answers would we miss . . . *do* we miss?

The modern intellect sees through Augustine's "accident" in the same way it scans Frankl's bit of rubble and has a ready explanation for the link "discovered" between the Hebrew, the Decalogue, and the crisis in a random life. Our ruling concepts are "coincidence" and "projection," as Frankl himself remarked: "Acknowledging this piece of marble as a hint from Heaven might well be the expression of the fact that already long before, in the depth of my heart, I had decided to stay. I only projected this decision into the appearance of the marble piece." But Frankl explains (in very Gadamerian terms) that if you make projection your theme then you too will have to project something: "Much the same way would it be self-expression if one saw nothing but $CaCO_3$ in it—although I would call this rather a projection of an existential vacuum." If you believe in your own voice, get used to hearing it. As Gadamer explains, "Open-

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ness to the other involves recognizing that I . . . must accept some things that are against me," as they were against Frankl's safety and Augustine's pleasure.

Can we hear the Father without hermeneutics? Augustine prayed and the Lord answered him, just as He answers those who do not pray and who do not know they have anything to pray about. But not even St. Augustine, sorrowfully keening for direction, would have heard that answer had he shut his ears to a distracting song that some neighborhood kid was singing as the background to his crisis. We are not talking here about meaningful banality, but about the linguisticality of the world, a world overwritten with letters, refrains, myths, parables, poems, dramas, films, stories—the "linguistic event" that connects us with Being.

If you see yourself as a creature of God environed by God's world, you must wake to the fact that it is God who decides how He will communicate with you. And so you must open all your senses, as it were—for, "In the last analysis," writes Gadamer, "Goethe's statement 'Everything is a symbol' is the most comprehensive formulation of the hermeneutical idea." Standing open to the eternal partner is the way to live in God's world, the way to the life that God has offered you. FT

The Hawk

The hawk landed,
Dropping like a stone
From granite sky,
Just the other side
Of the window where I sat,
Praying, as sun rose red
Through twisted twigs.
Wounded, I thought,
Until I saw, trapped
Beneath his crooked claws,
A body twitch.

The hawk rested
As the squirrel died,
As I told myself
What I knew to be true:
This isn't cruelty
Or even desire.
It's simply the world
Turning as it always has.

The hawk lifted,
Dragging like an anchor
Into the dark reef of winter trees,
Leaving nothing behind
As I prayed for the squirrel,
And the hawk, and the world.

Sarah Rossiter

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Catholicism as the Other

Christopher Shannon

Martin Scorsese's recent film *The Gangs of New York* takes us back to a time when religion, not race, set the terms for ethnocultural conflict in America. The film begins in the 1840s with a battle between rival gangs of native (Anglo) Americans and immigrants (largely Irish, even more largely Catholic); it ends with the Civil War draft riots of 1863. Following the received historical wisdom of our day, reviewers generally acknowledged the latter event, which featured Irish Americans assaulting African Americans, as a pivotal turning point in American history; the film's main story of the conflict between Irish Catholic immigrants and Anglo-Protestant nativists appears as something of a historical oddity, incidental to the "broader" story of the birth of the modern city. The religious story simply has no meaning in our current political and cultural landscape. Perhaps this accounts for the film's astonishing shutout at last year's Academy Awards ceremony.

Catholics as individuals and as a social group certainly no longer face the overt and violent hostility of old-style nativism. Catholicism as a cultural orientation, a general attitude toward authority and community, however, remains beyond the pale of respectable American liberalism. Despite the Church's (late) embrace of political democracy and the guardedly democratic "people of God" ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, Catholicism remains a belief system that accepts hierarchy as good and affirms the primacy of the Church as authoritative community over any authority claims issuing from personal religious experience. These beliefs mark the outer limit of diversity in the generally antinomian culture of contemporary American liberalism.

The presence of a bias against traditional religion in contemporary liberal discourse should come as no surprise to readers of this journal. More surprising is the claim that secular liberalism still works within assumptions about community and authority that took shape in the early modern wars of religion. By the mid-twentieth century, explicitly religious language gave way to the more decorous social-scientific language of culture, but the battle lines remained much the same: culture as given (Catholicism) must give way to culture as choice (Protestantism). The cultural diversity celebrated by contemporary multiculturalism is less an affirmation of the survival of distinct authoritative cultural traditions within America than a celebration of the inalienable right of individuals to sample the world's cultures as resources for individual self-development. Multiculturalism stands as the heir to nineteenth-century nativism not by any explicit hostility to Catholicism, but rather through its explicit, if sometimes obtuse, hostility to culture.

Conservatives have accused multiculturalism of many things, but hostility to culture is hardly the first charge that comes to mind. In his *Disuniting of America,* Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has provided one account of what may be the most recognizable story of the place of multiculturalism in contemporary political debate. Schlesinger, like many a Cold War liberal, now finds himself, on this issue at least, something of a cultural conservative without having substantially changed any of his views over the last fifty years. Criticizing current

CHRISTOPHER SHANNON *is the author of* Conspicuous Criticism *(1996) and* A World Made Safe for Differences *(2001). He is currently a research associate at the Jacques Maritain Center at the University of Notre Dame. This article is a revised version of a talk originally delivered at the St. Anselm Institute at the University of Virginia.*

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multiculturalists for their narrow understanding of culture in terms of exclusive membership in isolated, closed communities defined by ethnic or racial origin, he laments the passing of the glorious era of "consensus," when Americans affirmed a tolerant pluralism within the context of a single, shared American culture.

Leading figures from Schlesinger's generational cohort more sympathetic to multiculturalism nonetheless accept his characterization of the generational divide. In *We're All Multiculturalists Now*, sociologist Nathan Glazer accepts the cultural balkanization of contemporary multiculturalism as the price good liberals must pay for the failure of earlier attempts at racial and cultural integration. The cultural chauvinism of certain strains of multiculturalism is a necessary corrective to the historic demands for assimilation into a single Anglo-American cultural ideal. The future may allow for some more fruitful interaction between marginal and mainstream culture, but the present belongs to a kind of cultural separatism.

Were such separatism actually a contending ideological position, multiculturalism could at least claim the distinction of offering some real alternative to contemporary liberalism. Alas, as no less a figure than James Davison Hunter has pointed out, multiculturalism more often than not is little more than a new way of voicing a classically American individualism. In *Before the Shooting Begins*, a sequel to his influential *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, Hunter takes issue with multiculturalists' claims regarding diversity. Surveying the literature on multicultural education, Hunter finds predictable appeals for tolerance often obscuring a more troubling message of seeming indifference.

Yes, the literature proceeds from a kind of commonsense cultural relativism that insists on the irreducible diversity of human cultures and the moral neutrality of all cultural beliefs and practices; predictably, suspension of judgment is prelude to acceptance and intercultural harmony. Hunter argues that this model of intercultural understanding ultimately glosses over important differences. Particular understandings of religion and family may differ across cultures, yet as one representative public school position paper asserts, these particular beliefs and practices are simply "different answers to basic human questions that confront all peoples of the world." Retreating from a rigorous relativism, multicultural education ignores unsavory (to Westerners) cultural practices and insists that despite differences of food, dress, religion, etc., we are all deep down really the same. The implicit message that cultural differences in no way interfere with our common humanity ultimately trivializes culture and actually discourages children from taking their own culture seriously. Indeed, the same position paper explicitly states that the purpose of multicultural education is to "*help children live in more than one culture.*" Multiculturalism may help us understand where people are coming from, but it points all of us away from our own cultures to a life, in effect, beyond culture.

Hunter's argument holds as we shift from popular to elite multiculturalism. The academic literature is endless, but I have found an early 1990s exchange in the *American Quarterly*, the official journal of the American Studies Association, to be the most instructive with respect to the internal contradictions of the celebration of cultural diversity. By granting the lead essay to the consensus-era historian John Higham, the editors clearly wished to structure their forum as a battle between old-guard liberal *history* and new, multicultural *histories*. Higham played his appointed role in part by offering a fairly standard liberal declension narrative. Anticipating Schlesinger, Higham tells the story of the long, hard struggle to achieve an inclusive society, a struggle that peaked with the civil rights movement and continued on with steady gains through the 1970s and early 1980s, only to be undermined by ethnic chauvinists—that is, radical multiculturalists—who seem to reject the possibility of a common American culture that transcends particular group identities. Predictably, the multiculturalist respondents participating in the forum attack Higham's modest plea for common ground as an assimilationist assault on diversity. One scholar, Nancy Hewitt, dismisses Higham's "unitary perspective" with the almost patriotic assertion that "we Americans have never held a single vision of what we want the country to become." Another scholar, Vicki Ruiz, invokes the laundry list of "racism, sexism, imperialism, persecution, and social, political, and economic segmentation" to expose the blindness of Higham's liberal narrative of steady progress.

More telling than this liberal/radical vituperation is the common ground, if you will, that unites the two sides. Ruiz invokes the specter of oppressive social forces less as a threat to culture than a threat to choice. Multiculturalism demands sensitivity to the ways in which people "navigate across cultural boundaries as well as make conscious decisions in the production of culture." Ruiz understands culture as a resource in the struggle to achieve autonomy, and reminds us simply that people "have not had unlimited choice" in their use of culture. Racism, sexism, and so forth appear as constraints on "aspirations, expectations, and decision making," not on culture. Ruiz and her fellow multiculturalist commentators reduce culture to the issue of human agency (individual or collective) and reduce power to the question of the number of choices and

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options people have in controlling their lives. Despite his rhetoric of common ground, Higham similarly locates his utopian ideal outside of culture. Rejecting both assimilation and separatism, Higham calls on multiculturalists to "find a center of gravity in a centerless space where outsiders resist and simultaneously enrich an overall national culture." Ruiz's cross-cultural navigation and Higham's liminal, centerless space share a common vision of culture as process rather than substance, less a whole way of life than an instrumental way of living.

Well, all of this seems a long way from Catholicism, and an even longer way from *The Gangs of New York*. But perhaps not. In the exchange with Higham, one scholar proved sharp enough to detect an older religious narrative in the contemporary secular debate. Gerald Early rightly traced multiculturalism's obsession with issues of personal identity back to the Puritan tradition of self-scrutiny; he would have done better had he also traced the metaphors of boundlessness that run through so much of multicultural (and liberal) rhetoric to their roots in the post-Puritan transcendentalism of nineteenth-century American literature. The multicultural attack on "structural barriers rooted in race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship" must be understood as a contemporary manifestation of the classic American antinomian rejection of all restrictive—or even defining—structures external to the self. Regrettably, even Early proved too dull to consider that American culture could ever possibly be anything else. That something else, the repressed story, if you will, simmering beneath the surface of the discourse of multiculturalism, is Catholicism.

The culture of Emerson has also been the culture of a romantic Catholicism that a significant number of Anglo-American intellectuals have looked to as the only viable alternative to the rootless autonomy still celebrated by many as the promise of American life. Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* inaugurated a modern intellectual tradition that has understood the democratic revolutions of Europe and America not simply as a change in political rule, but as the disruption of a timeless social order in which people were bound together in an organic unity on the model of the human body. Modern democracy replaced the traditional bonds of mutual affection and obligation with the abstract principles of consent and contract; freeing the individual from traditional constraints, modern society also denied him traditional supports and protections. The fragmentation of social life carried with it a corresponding fragmentation of cultural and moral life. Nineteenth-century intellectuals, first in the guise of Romantic poets and later as social scientists, gave themselves the task of reintegrating this fragmented world in a way that would both recapture and transcend the unity lost.

In England and America, this quest for reintegration presents us with the irony of largely Protestant or secular Protestant and Jewish intellectuals looking back to the Catholic Middle Ages as a model of social unity and organic wholeness. Charles Eliot Norton, the most significant American practitioner of this tradition of cultural criticism, may have preferred the Italian Renaissance to the Middle Ages, yet here again we have a case of a Protestant thinker looking to Catholic culture as an antidote to modern alienation. Norton is particularly important for his role in revamping the humanities curriculum at Harvard in the late-nineteenth century. As Harvard and similar institutions transformed themselves into modern research universities, they abandoned the classical curriculum of the antebellum college and adopted the disciplinary division of labor that we still suffer under today. Norton's specialty was art history, and his survey courses in this field were central to the construction of what we think of today as Western Civilization. For Norton, Western Civilization reached its peak in the artistic productions of Dante, DaVinci, and Michaelangelo.

Norton's love for Italian Catholic culture in no way diminished his contempt for the Church as an authoritarian institution and for actual living Catholics as ignorant peasants. This aestheticized Anglo-Catholicism found its most sophisticated American articulation in the work of Henry Adams. Scion of a founding family of America, Adams found himself a displaced person in a world in which science and industrial capitalism rendered the claims of family privilege obsolete. Adams found in the Marian symbolism of premodern Catholicism a redemptive, nurturing alternative to the rapacious, destructive ethos of modern machine civilization. As with Norton, Adams had no use for Catholicism as a living faith, and recoiled in horror at the immigrant Church overwhelming his beloved Yankee cities. Still, his writing sustained the image of Catholicism as the ultimate "other" to modernity.

During the 1920s, the search for an alternative to modern industrial society expanded its focus beyond the Catholic past to include the primitive present. Even as Eliot, Pound, and Hemingway continued the literary tradition of Anglo-Catholic romanticism, anthropology and sociology came into their own as purveyors of wholeness and unity. The key figures in this development are Columbia anthropologist Franz Boas and his two famous students, Margaret Mead and Ruth

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Benedict. With Boas, we see the emergence of an intellectual vocabulary clearly recognizable as incipient multiculturalism. The father of modern anthropology, Boas made his mark by attacking two of the foundational principles of Victorian anthropology. First, against the tradition of scientific racism, Boas argued that culture, not biology, accounts for differences among human groups. Second, against the tradition of cultural evolutionism, which saw human culture as a single entity divisible into developmental stages, culminating in the civilization of modern Western Europe, Boas insisted that no culture is superior to any other and that each culture in the world had to be understood in its own terms. Each culture is unique in its content/substance, but shares with other cultures a general process/form of arranging values and practices into ordered, unified patterns.

Boas' relativism suggested epistemological anarchy and the abolition of human nature, yet also affirmed that each culture possessed the order and unity of a great work of art. It led on the one hand toward nihilism, but on the other toward Catholicism.

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, it somehow managed to lead toward both at the same time. The positive evaluation of cultural diversity became a critical tool for attacking certain undesirable American cultural values and practices, while the idea of patterning held out the promise of integrating the new values into a coherent cultural whole. This tension between criticism and culture, if you will, runs throughout the work of Boas' students, Mead and Benedict; it consistently resolves itself in favor of criticism over culture. Ethnographies that begin by revealing cultural patterns end by arguing for the necessity of cultural change.

Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) remains the clearest symptom of this contradictory cultural logic. A bestseller, it was the breakthrough book that helped to make Boasian anthropology the cultural common sense of educated middle-class readers. A study of adolescence among the simple, "primitive" people native to American-occupied Samoa, Mead's book is best known for its advocacy of sexual liberation against the Victorian values of sexual repression that she believed still dominated American life. Sexual repression makes adolescence a turbulent time for American youth. In Samoa, teenagers are free to experiment with many sexual partners and adolescence is a generally conflict-free period of transition to adulthood. Mead's conclusion: if American teenagers were free to experiment sexually, they too would experience a smooth transition to adulthood and America will have gone a long way toward solving its problem of juvenile delinquency.

Mead has been criticized for romanticizing and exoticizing Samoa as an island sexual paradise. One critic, the late Derek Freeman, made a career out of saying that Mead simply made it all up. More significant than the book's accuracy is its logic. Historians and anthropologists who have emphasized Mead's celebration of Samoan culture have generally neglected her criticisms of it, criticisms rooted in the Boasian notion of cultural patterning. True to her anthropological ideas, Mead understood Samoan sexual freedom in the context of a broader culture that has no place for the romantic love or emotional intimacy Westerners tend to associate with sex. In adopting Samoan sexual practices, must Americans adopt Samoan attitudes toward romantic love? Not at all. For Mead, it is a very simple matter of picking and choosing what you like and do not like in a particular culture.

The not-so-hidden agenda of *Coming of Age in Samoa* is less sexual liberation per se than a broader ideal that Mead calls "education for choice." The ideal method of child rearing would expose children to as many alternative ways of living as possible and allow them as much real choice as possible in adopting those values and practices they find appealing. By this standard of choice, Samoan culture itself stands condemned, for it limits Samoans to only one way of life. Mead admires Samoan culture's tolerance of adolescent sexual promiscuity but finds genuinely repellant its lack of respect for privacy and its social ethic of kinship obligation, which she describes as a system of "universal servitude." At one point she even compares the lack of privacy to the social surveillance of small town America. In the age of Sinclair Lewis novels, she could make no more damning comparison.

Earlier Anglo-Protestant art critics came to appreciate the Catholic art of the Middle Ages and Renaissance by extracting it from the institutional authority of the Church. Mead follows in this tradition by coming to appreciate Samoan sexual practices only after she tears them out of the context of the authoritative cultural pattern of Samoan life. She explicitly places her vision of education for choice in a religious tradition rooted in the Protestant Reformation. For Mead, the Reformation broke the spiritual monopoly of the Catholic Church and introduced the principle of choice into religious life. Mead argues that the Protestant churches of her time have betrayed the legacy of the Reformation by continuing to pressure children to choose exclusive membership in one church; she further argues that her ideal of education for choice remains true to the original spirit of the Reformation by allowing people to keep their options open.

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With the onset of the Great Depression, Boasian anthropology shifted from criticism to reconstruction. Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934) helped to popularize the idea of American culture as a whole way of life deeper than any discredited economic system of free enterprise; it also helped to convince many that the New Deal state stood as the objective manifestation of this newly found cultural unity.

Despite general support for the New Deal through four presidential elections, state centralization revived certain traditional American fears for personal liberty. Particularly when directed at parallel developments abroad, these fears were often couched in a traditional American idiom of anti-Catholicism. Even as many liberal intellectuals embraced a very Catholic ideal of cultural organicism, they saw in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union a kind of return of the Catholic repressed, a regression to the medieval authoritarianism responsible for the Crusades and the Inquisition.

The culture concept survived association with the dark side of integration largely through its ability to provide an alternative to what liberal intellectuals saw as the most pernicious ideal of integration at stake in the war: race. Hitler's anti-Semitism transformed what had been an orthodox scientific category into an ideology of genocide. Repulsion at the racist doctrines of Nazi Germany brought more than a little shock of recognition on the part of Americans, most clearly in the domestic racism against African Americans, but also in the attitudes toward the Japanese expressed in the conduct of the Pacific War. Americans willing to distinguish Germans from Nazis tended to see all the Japanese as part of a single, undifferentiated barbaric yellow horde. Boasian anthropology performed yet anther major exercise in consciousness-raising through its postwar efforts to achieve intercultural understanding between the United States and Japan.

The key work here is Ruth Benedict's 1946 study of Japanese culture, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Benedict began working on this book during World War II, while serving in the psychological warfare division of the Office of War Information (OWI). Despite its military origins, the book is nonetheless a sincere attempt to present Japanese culture as an integrated whole deserving of the utmost respect from Americans. Refusing to paper over cultural differences, Benedict contrasts Japan and America in a manner as predictable as it is extreme: the Japanese value order and hierarchy, while Americans value freedom and equality. Unlike Americans, the Japanese value fixed social stations over social mobility, the spiritual over the material, honor over profit, and the external constraints of shame over the internal sanctions of guilt. Through these oppositions, Benedict creates a picture of the Japanese as a people bound together by a complicated network of ordered, hierarchical, and personal obligations, which contrasts sharply with the easygoing individualism of American culture.

Benedict's characterization of Japan and America draws on conventional oppositions between America and the rest of the world that go back at least to the writings of Crèvecoeur in the eighteenth century. Before anthropologists began to use them as a cultural narrative for contrasting East and West, they served Western intellectuals as a historical narrative through which to frame the passage from the medieval to the modern—or, in more specifically religious terms, from Catholicism to Protestantism. Much of the hostile criticism of Japan on the part of Western observers can be seen as an extension of the self-critique that drove the modern West to throw off its own primitive, barbaric Catholic past. No less a figure than General Douglas MacArthur spoke of the negative aspects of Japanese culture as residues of "feudalistic forms of oppression." The anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer, who like Benedict served in the OWI, explicitly compared Japanese support for the emperor with the attachment of medieval Catholics to the pope. In general, the degree of hostility expressed in wartime accounts of Japanese culture depended on the relative weight given to its premodern dimensions, as opposed to the more palatable modern aspects, such as its enthusiastic embrace of Western science and technology. This hostility often slid into racism when premodern traits came to be seen as rooted in the biological makeup of the Japanese people, but the demonizing of these traits themselves predates and transcends racial categories. In this sense, modern racism has its intellectual roots in anti-Catholicism.

Rejecting both tradition and modernity, Benedict argues for the adoption of a modern attitude toward tradition. Her vision of postwar Japan requires less that the Japanese accept any particular Western standard than that they adopt a general (Western) anthropological standard of critical cultural consciousness. It would be a shame if Japan were to become a carbon copy of America, but it would be a crime if the Japanese did not learn to see their culture as simply one among many, with no privileged status, entirely open to revision in the service of consciously chosen ends. Quoting from *A Daughter of the Samurai*, Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto's account of her experiences in a mission school in Tokyo, Benedict presents a particularly striking example of this new cultural consciousness.

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In her memoir, Sugimoto recounts an incident in which each girl at the school received a plot of ground on which to plant anything she wanted. Sugimoto writes:

> This plant-as-you-please garden gave me a wholly new feeling of personal right. . . . The very fact that such happiness could exist in the human heart was a surprise to me. . . . I, with no violation of tradition, no stain on the family name, no shock to parent, teacher, or townspeople, no harm to anything, was free to act.

This experience transforms Sugimoto's understanding of her culture. She now realizes that although at her "home there was one part of the garden that was supposed to be wild . . . someone was always busy trimming the pines or cutting the hedge." According to Benedict, Sugimoto's realization of the "simulated" nature of the "wildness" and "freedom of will" allowed by Japanese culture initiated a "transition to a greater psychic freedom" through which she discovered the "pure joy in being natural." Sugimoto's detachment from tradition, family, teacher, and townspeople serves Benedict as a model of "natural" social relations for postwar Japan. What Benedict calls a "self-respecting Japan" will be a Japan that respects the self, or more precisely, the individual. To be a responsible member of the family of nations, Japan must "set up a way of life which does not demand the old requirements of individual restraint" and move toward a "dispensation which honors individual freedom."

As a person caught between two worlds, Etsu Sugimoto serves as a model not simply for the Japanese, but for America as well. This ideal of what anthropologists call liminality—the condition of being in transition, caught between two worlds—provided the fundamental orienting ideal for the whole postwar American discourse of cultural diversity, structuring race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. Multiculturalists today still caution against stasis, and still counsel constant transition and interaction between cultures. Liminality—or in the tellingly biological metaphor favored these days, hybridity—must be a whole way of life. Anything less than constant movement would be stasis, and stasis would mean a regression to . . . Catholicism?

Benedict had no particular axe to grind against Catholicism, but the specter of authoritarian Catholicism continued to hang over the postwar discourse of democracy and cultural pluralism. In 1949, Paul Blanshard would score a best seller with his anti-Catholic polemic *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, while a year later Theodor Adorno would provide social-scientific sanction to the equation of tradition and fascism with his *Authoritarian Personality*, a work that has served liberals as a kind of all-purpose handbook for explaining Catholic intolerance from McCarthyism to school busing and abortion. Protestant and secular Americans turned to the idea of culture as a corrective to the excesses of American individualism, but insisted that culture must remain subordinate to the individual. Catholics, in turn, acknowledged the legitimacy of some of the critique of the Church's traditional understanding of authority and sought to develop a richer language of personal freedom, yet insisted on the priority of culture to the individual. In 1946, the same year as Benedict published her *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, the Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain offered his *The Person and the Common Good* as a distinctly Catholic vision of the proper ordering of freedom and culture.

Like so many thinkers of his time, Maritain sought a third way between authoritarian statism and laissez-faire individualism. Rooted in Thomist philosophy, the category of the person provided Maritain with a language through which to refute Catholic supporters of fascism as well as secular liberal defenders of a purely instrumental social order. In *The Person and the Common Good*, Maritain writes of the human person as "a spiritual totality" that exists in relation to a "transcendent whole." This relation renders the human person "superior to every value of mere social utility," in dignity and worth "superior to all temporal societies." In even stronger language, Maritain insists that "with respect to the eternal destiny of the soul, society exists for each person and is subordinated to it."

Still, the person is not simply an individual with a spiritual dimension. The inviolability of the person does not make him the primary purpose or end of the social order. Maritain affirms the dignity of the person only in the context of a relation of mutual and reciprocal subordination. Though superior to mere utility,

> a human life is less precious than the moral good and the duty of assuring the salvation of the community, is less precious than the human and moral patrimony of which the community is the repository, and is less precious also than the human and moral work which the community carries on from one century to the next.

I know of no clearer statement of the Catholic understanding of the place of the human person in society. I know of no clearer challenge to the expressive individualism propagated by contemporary multiculturalism. In Maritain's time, and our own, Catholicism—not race, class, gender, ethnicity, or sexuality—

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has stood as the most serious Western cultural alternative to American individualism. A minority social ethic in the modern West, this Catholic communalism is, moreover, a particular instance of a majority ethic that has characterized most human societies throughout history. By the standards of world history and culture, the individual, not the community, is the category in need of justification.

Catholics are of course not the only Westerners to question the socially corrosive effects of individualism. My general thinking on these issues is deeply indebted to the work of Michael Sandel, particularly the powerful secular communitarian critique of liberal social contract theory he put forth in his book *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Sandel argues that liberal political theorists from Thomas Hobbes to John Rawls have proceeded from the fundamentally flawed assumption that people exist first of all as individuals, and as individuals they consciously decide to create society. In subsequent works, Sandel has looked to an indigenous, if somewhat neglected, American tradition of republicanism as a communal alternative to mainstream liberal political theory.

Sandel and many of his fellow communitarians draw heavily on the tradition of Alexis de Tocqueville, who in his 1830s work *Democracy in America* argued that democracy would avoid anarchy and/or state regimentation only to the degree that it sustained the vitality of the small scale, mediating institutions of civil society. The most common Tocquevillian term for these institutions—voluntary associations—points to the clearest distinction between the secular and Catholic traditions. For Catholics, community, like the Church, is not voluntary but something into which you are born. It exists before you, will exist after you, and exists primarily to sustain truths and values that transcend the needs of any particular individual. The Catholic insistence on the priority of community to the individual has often been coded as authoritarianism; the secular alternatives have often reduced community to little more than a support group. The common enemy of individualism has not provided enough common ground to overcome the secular communitarian suspicion of Catholicism.

Anti-Catholicism has been called America's oldest prejudice, the anti-Semitism of the intellectuals. Catholicism, at least as metaphor, still serves as the demonic "other" of secular modernity. When not preaching a quasi-New Age, communitarian gospel of globalization, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman is one of the more perceptive commentators on Middle East politics. Before the shooting started in Iraq, Friedman wrote an article assessing the state of Arab democracy in the Middle East. Significantly, he titled his column "An Islamic Reformation." Friedman's article paid tribute to Hashem Aghajari, an Iranian intellectual sentenced to death by Muslim hard-liners for a speech he delivered on the need to rejuvenate Iran with what he called an "Islamic Protestantism." In this speech, Aghajari appealed to the Reformation as a model for contemporary Islam. He stated that just as "the Protestant movement wanted to rescue Christianity from the clergy and the church hierarchy," so Islam must throw off the domination of narrow-minded, fundamentalist clerics and embark on a new, more constructive engagement with Western modernity. He declared: "We need a religion that respects the rights of all—a progressive religion, rather than a traditional religion that tramples the people. . . ." Somewhat left of the current administration on issues regarding the Middle East, much further to the left on most everything else, Friedman shares with George W. Bush the basic assumption that the Aghajaris of Islam are the best hope for peace in the Middle East—and by extension, peace in the world.

Tradition/Catholicism oppresses, modernity/Protestantism liberates: this simple opposition sets the limits of diversity in America for liberals and conservatives alike.

I should add for Catholics as well. My general sense is that if you were to ask most American Catholics what they consider to be the most pressing problem facing the Church today, they would think of sexually abusive priests, not the breakdown of neo-Thomist, personalist conceptions of community; I would like to think that the two are in some sense related, but I am not prepared to make such an argument. I suspect that few American Catholics would willingly accept the degree of communal constraint advocated by Maritain, were they even aware of it. Conservatives stress economic freedom, liberals cultural and sexual freedom, but it is the rhetoric of perpetual motion, not communal permanence, which speaks most powerfully to the experience of American Catholics today. The general assimilation of American Catholics to the secular Protestant norms of middle-class American consumerism should be of concern to all those who believe in the continuity of tradition and hope for some meaningful understanding of cultural diversity beyond multiculturalism. FT

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Books in Review

From Myth to History and Back

Galileo in Rome: The Rise and Fall of a Troublesome Genius. By William R. Shea and Mariano Artigas. *Oxford University Press. 211 pp. $20.*

Galileo's Mistake: A New Look at the Epic Confrontation between Galileo and the Church. By Wade Rowland. *Arcade. 298 pp. $26.95.*

Reviewed by Stephen M. Barr

For centuries the trial of Galileo (1564-1642) was the stuff of myth: Galileo tortured by the Inquisition; his defiant words after recanting ("*e pur se muove*," "but it does move"); the infallible Church proclaiming the dogma that the Sun goes round the Earth. None of these details is true, but that did not seem to matter much to those who exalted Galileo as a martyr to truth.

Fortunately, the twentieth century saw a movement away from such polemical accounts. Anticlerical prejudice is still evident in Giorgio de Santillana's *The Crime of Galileo* (1955). However, through the work of such scholars as Alexandre Koyré, Stillman Drake, Jerome Langford, and Richard Blackwell, a more accurate understanding of the case began to emerge and take hold. Langford's *Galileo, Science, and the Church* (1966) is still the best introduction to the subject, especially in explaining the scientific and theological issues, and its main conclusions have held up well.

The new book by William R. Shea and Mariano Artigas, *Galileo in Rome: The Rise and Fall of a Troublesome Genius*, represents the finest in modern Galileo scholarship. Shea holds the "Galileo Chair" in the History of Science at the University of Padua, where Galileo was once professor of mathematics. Artigas, a Catholic priest with doctorates in physics and philosophy, is Professor of the Philosophy of Science at the University of Navarra. Their book tells the story of the great founder of modern science from the viewpoint of his six visits to Rome, the first as a twenty-three-year-old job seeker, the last as an old and fearful man summoned to appear before the Inquisition. Shea and Artigas offer no strikingly new theories, but that is to their credit. Rather, their aim is to let us walk in the footsteps of Galileo and see afresh and in vivid context the events of his rise and fall.

Galileo became a celebrity in 1610 when he turned his telescope to the heavens and made a series of remarkable discoveries. These were quickly confirmed by the leading astronomers of the day, including the Jesuits of the Roman College. Galileo's most critical telescopic discovery was that Venus had phases like the Moon. These phases revealed that Venus and Earth were sometimes on opposite sides of the Sun, a configuration impossible in the Ptolemaic theory.

While proving Ptolemy wrong, these discoveries did not prove Copernicus completely right, for there existed a compromise proposed by Tycho Brahe. Tycho agreed with Copernicus as far as the *relative* movements of the celestial bodies were concerned, but he assumed, like Ptolemy, that the Earth was at rest. The Jesuit astronomers embraced Tycho's theory because it reproduced all existing observations just as well as Copernicus, while not raising sticky scriptural issues.

Galileo, on the other hand, was convinced of the full truth of Copernicanism, and became increasingly outspoken for it. When accused of contradicting Scripture, he penned the famous *Letter to Castelli*, in which he argued that Scripture in describing nature spoke according to appearances, not literally. It was this exegetical foray that spurred the Holy Office into action. While many factors were involved in the opposition to Galileo, not least an entrenched Aristotelianism, it is clear that the critical issue for Cardinal Bellarmine and the Roman Inquisition, which he headed, was the interpretation of Scripture.

Bellarmine laid out his views with great lucidity in a letter to Paolo Foscarini, a friend of Galileo. The Council of Trent, he noted, prohibited interpreting Scripture in matters of faith and morals contrary to the Church Fathers. While the motions of the Sun and Earth are not of the *substance* of the faith, he admitted, they are matters of faith incidentally, since Scripture makes assertions about them. Therefore the strictures of Trent apply, and one must follow the Fathers, who understood the relevant passages literally.

Logically speaking, Galileo's position was not inconsistent with Trent. If astronomical matters do *not* pertain to the faith, then the Father's interpretations do not nec-

Stephen M. Barr *is a theoretical particle physicist at the Bartol Research Institute of the University of Delaware. He is the author of* Modern Physics and Ancient Faith *(University of Notre Dame Press).*

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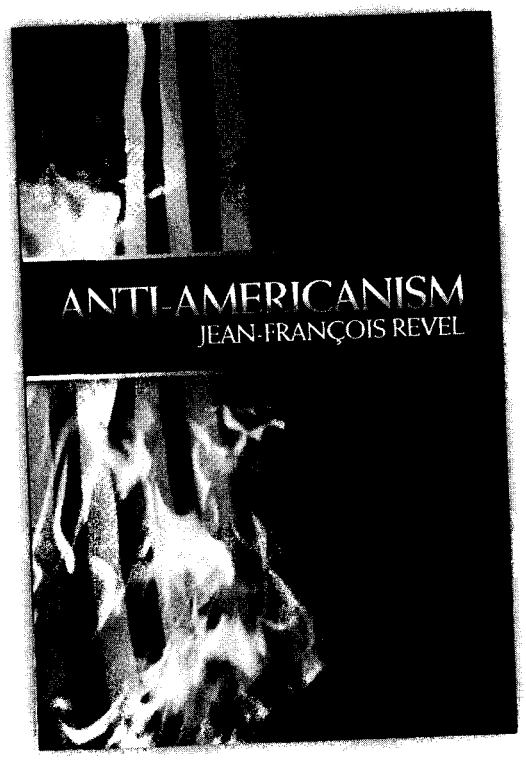
essarily have to be followed, according to Trent. And if the Fathers' naïve literalism on these matters is *not* followed, there is simply no reason to assume they pertain to the faith. However, the Holy Office failed to see this. On February 26, 1616, Galileo was secretly enjoined from defending "in any way" the motion of the Earth or immobility of the Sun. Eight days later, the Congregation of the Index prohibited books that maintained the truth of Copernicanism.

Bellarmine was reasonably well informed about astronomy. He knew that heliocentrism had advantages as a calculational method for predicting the appearances of the heavens, but he sharply distinguished this from the claim that the Earth actually moved. He conceded to the latter only a bare possibility. "If there were a true demonstration [that the Earth is moving]," he wrote to Foscarini, "it would be necessary to proceed with great caution in explaining the passages of Scripture which seemed contrary, and we would have to say that we did not understand them rather than declare something false which had been demonstrated to be true." However, he had "grave doubts" that such a demonstration was possible, and "in a case of doubt, one may not depart from the holy Fathers."

Galileo had a friend, admirer, and protector in Maffeo Cardinal Barberini; and when Barberini ascended the papal throne as Urban VIII in 1624, Galileo saw a chance to rehabilitate Copernicanism. Galileo had developed a brilliant theory of the tides, which he believed was the needed "demonstration" of the Earth's motion. Urban, unaware of the secret injunction that bound Galileo (Bellarmine had since died), encouraged him to write, thinking that Galileo would discuss Copernicanism "hypothetically" rather than maintaining its truth. Galileo, badly misjudging the situation, published his great *Dialog on the Two Chief World Systems*, in which he not only vigorously argued for Copernicanism, but also lampooned one of Urban's own pet arguments. (Urban's argument was that no matter how well a theory explains effects, one cannot know that the theory is true, since an omnipotent God has the power to produce the effects in some other way. Taken to the limit, of course, this line of reasoning would strike at the root of all empirical knowledge.) Urban, think-



"*Anti-Americanism* is an intellectual tour de force and a joy to read. It will enlighten those with an open mind, although Jean-François Revel's biting style is unlikely to win over the others. But as Jonathan Swift remarked, it is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into."

–The Times Literary Supplement

Angered by the increasing hostility against a nation he knows and admires, the distinguished French intellectual Jean-François Revel has come to America's defense in *Anti-Americanism*, a witty and erudite book that paradoxically spent several weeks late last year on top of the French best-seller list.

At a time when it seems that much of the world is marching against America, Revel shows what they are really marching against is freedom.

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ing himself betrayed and held up to public ridicule by a man he had protected, was enraged. The long-forgotten injunction against Galileo was discovered at this point in the files of the Inquisition. Galileo was forced to abjure and sentenced to house arrest for life. He lived in reasonable comfort, was allowed to receive visitors, and continued to publish on scientific matters until his death.

It is one of the great ironies of scientific history that Galileo's proofs of the Earth's motion were invalid and his theory of the tides mistaken. Many of the issues involved in the question of the Earth's motion could not be resolved without the theoretical breakthroughs of Newton, who was born the year Galileo died. The first real observational evidence that the Earth moved did not come until 1724, when the phenomenon of aberration of light was seen.

WADE ROWLAND, author of another new book on the Galileo case, *Galileo's Mistake: A New Look at the Epic Confrontation between Galileo and the Church*, holds a chair of Ethics in Communications at Ryerson University in Toronto. He is not a historian, philosopher, theologian, or scientist, at least to judge from the rather gross errors he makes in all those fields. It is remarkable that one so ill equipped should undertake a reinterpretation of so complex an episode in history. What is most remarkable about the book, however, is its thesis, which is essentially that Galileo had it coming.

It required decades of patient scholarship to advance from Galileo myth to Galileo history, but in one long stride Wade Rowland takes us back again. The new myth that he proposes is just the old one turned on its head. He accepts the discredited notion that the Catholic Church was hostile to scientific truth; however, rather than blaming the Church for this he praises her, for he is pretty hostile to scientific truth himself.

In Rowland's view, science has not made life happier or better; it has merely turned men into materialists and consumers. While it has cured diseases and produced abundance, it has also created pollution and nuclear weapons. The knowledge it gives does not make men wiser, but probably more foolish. Its arrogant reductionism seeks to abolish all meaning, purpose, and transcendence from the world. Of course, one can answer such com-

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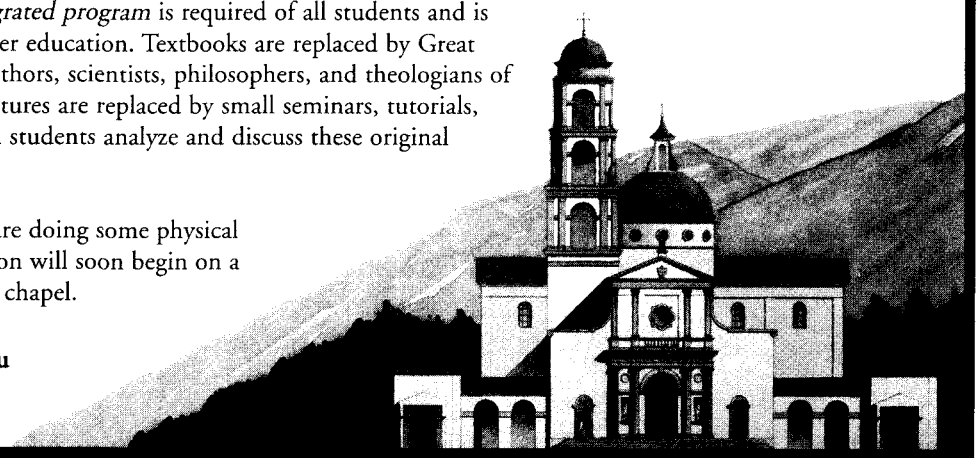

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plaints by distinguishing truth from the uses to which it is put. However, what Rowland objects to in science most of all is precisely its claim to tell us the truth about the physical world:

> Here in concise form is . . . "Galileo's mistake." . . . It is simply not correct to assert, as Galileo did, that there is a single and unique explanation to natural phenomena, which may be understood through observation and reason, and which makes all other explanations wrong.

Of course, a sane man would not say that because one explanation of a thing is correct all other explanations are wrong. He would say, however, that all *contrary* explanations are wrong. And that is certainly what Bellarmine, Urban, and Galileo all said. They all agreed that, since Scripture is right, anything contrary to it must be wrong, just as they agreed that anything contrary to what has been demonstrated by reason and observation must be wrong. When it came to the Earth's motion, they all believed that there was a fact of the matter; they just disagreed on what it was.

Rowland, however, employs all the standard postmodernist stratagems to attack the notions of scientific truth and fact. "All scientific knowledge," he writes, "is culturally conditioned. None of its laws or facts [is], strictly speaking, objective." Science is "rooted in consensus" and "socially constructed." "Scientists do not discover laws of nature, they invent them." Indeed, "reason is a human invention, . . . a process that takes place according to rules of logic that we make up. . . ."

Experiments cannot provide objective verification of theories, he claims, because experiments are interpreted using those same theories. "[T]heory and experiment are inextricably tied up together in a kind of recursive loop." Science's "basic method is in this way circular. . . ." The subjectivity of science explains "why, from time to time, there are 'revolutions' in science that overthrow one complete set of assumptions in favor of another." Physics does not give us truth about the world, but only yields mathematical "models" that more or less "work" or are "useful."

Is there anything to this critique? Very little. It is true that scientific knowledge is "socially constructed" in the sense that it is acquired through the cooperative efforts of a community of scholars, but this in no way implies that the reality thus known is *constituted* by those efforts. (Some reality, of course, is socially constructed in the postmodernist's sense, namely *social* reality, or aspects of it.) And science does, of course, depend a great deal on consensus, but it is the apprehension of truth that brings about such consensus (if scientists are objective), not consensus that makes things true.

The widely discussed dependence of experiment upon theory does lead to a kind of circularity, but only the harmless kind that was involved in, say, the making of maps. Maps were made by explorers; and explorers had to rely on existing maps. That circularity obviously did not prevent better and better maps from being made. Nor does it prevent better and better theories of the physical world.

The "revolutions" that occur in science hardly ever involve the overthrow of a "complete set of assumptions" as Rowland asserts. To use his example, Newtonian mechanics was *not* entirely overthrown by relativity; it is, indeed, the one and only correct limit of rel-

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ativity theory when velocities are small. Moreover, most of the fundamental insights and concepts of Newtonian physics remain valid in relativity theory, including Newton's three laws of motion. What Einstein did was supply crucial insights about the structure of space-time that were missing from the Newtonian picture. Newtonian physics was not annulled, but sublated in a higher viewpoint. So it is with almost every great scientific advance.

ALL THE POSTMODERN tomfoolery in which Rowland indulges has nothing to do with the Galileo case. All the principals in that case believed in "the natural light of human reason." It is true that Galileo's contemporaries failed to appreciate what the physicist Eugene Wigner famously called "the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics" in understanding the physical world. With few exceptions, they did tend to think of mathematical theories in merely instrumental terms, as convenient calculational tools that worked but could not be of much help in getting at the essence of things. However, theirs was an excusable ignorance; they lived before Newton.

Galileo made mistakes, both political and scientific, but the fact remains that he was the one forced to abjure the truth. Why did the Church authorities rush to judgment? Oddly enough, it was from a desire to be cautious. They observed all around them the dreadful consequences to which novel interpretations of Scripture could lead: Christendom lay shattered, the Thirty Years War raged. Their mistake was in thinking it cautious to condemn, when true caution in the case of Galileo lay in forbearance. They were blindsided by the Scientific Revolution, but at least, unlike the postmodernists, they were not willfully blind.

A Noble Failure

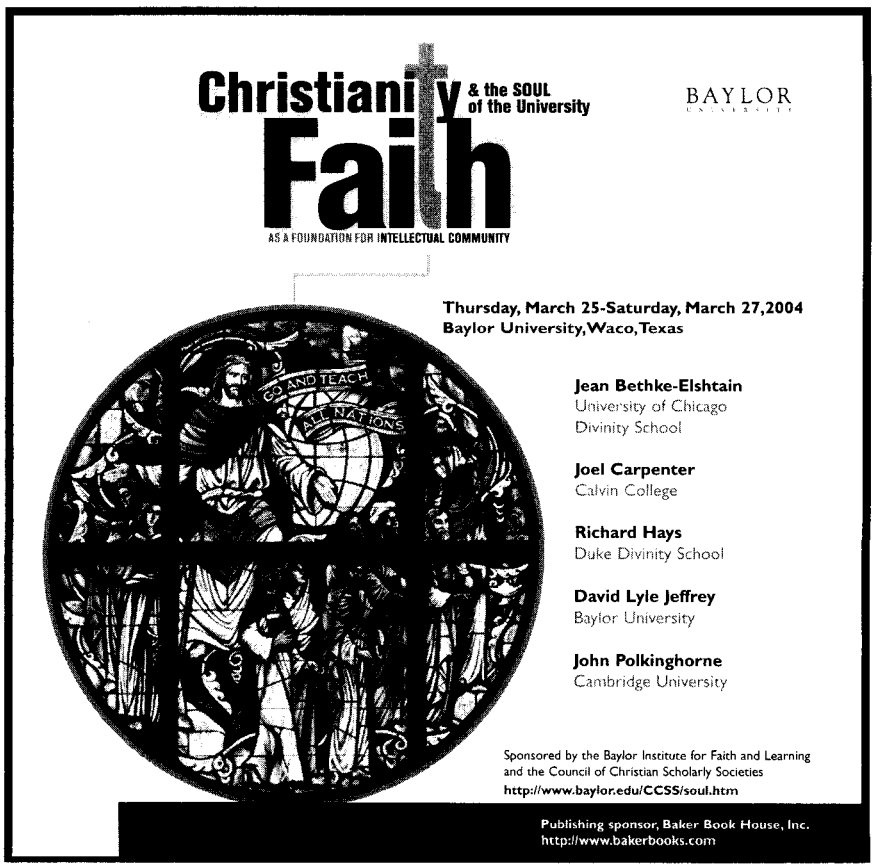
SKEPTICISM AND FREEDOM: A MODERN CASE FOR CLASSICAL LIBERALISM. By RICHARD A. EPSTEIN. *University of Chicago Press. 311 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by Daniel J. Mahoney

We do not lack theoretical "defenses" of liberalism. Indeed, academic political theorists have produced them by the truckload over the past several decades. Restatements of the case for *classical* liberalism, however, are less common—and, for that reason, all the more needful. In *Skepticism and Freedom*, Richard A. Epstein, a distinguished legal theorist and University of Chicago law professor, provides us with a lucid and vigorous—if ultimately flawed—account of classical liberalism that goes a significant way toward satisfying our need for thoughtful reflection on the foundations of the liberal democratic order.

As the subtitle of Epstein's book makes clear, his is a *modern* case for classical liberalism. Seeking to defend and reinvigorate an older tradition of liberal politics and political economy, he draws freely on economic arguments, the broad tradition of natural rights liberalism, the work of Friedrich Hayek, and some of the insights of "rational choice" theory. In particular, Epstein sets out to modernize the classical liberal tradition by showing how it conforms to the permanent nature and needs of

DANIEL J. MAHONEY *is Chairman of the Political Science department at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts. He is presently completing a book on the political thought of Bertrand de Jouvenel and (with Edward E. Ericson, Jr.) is editing an anthology of the writings of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.*



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human beings as revealed by both ordinary experience and the full range of the empirically oriented social sciences. Epstein attempts to demonstrate that the premises of liberalism are much more than rational "deductions" from a priori philosophical principles. He wishes to take the *natural* in natural law seriously without confusing natural rights liberalism with a crude social Darwinism or with a narrow utilitarianism that is unable to affirm any permanent principles or enduring truths.

Authentic liberalism, in Epstein's presentation, places its confidence in the "autonomy" of the individual, in legally defined property rights, and a system of torts which redresses "force and fraud" in an imperfect world. But the true liberal is no anarchist and does not consider the state to be his enemy. The liberal does not hesitate to admit that limited government needs extensive, coercive authority within its own realm. As Epstein puts it near the end of his book, limited government is necessarily "a large and complex undertaking."

At the heart of *Skepticism and Freedom* is a distinction between two versions of skepticism, one conducive to, and the other destructive of, human and political liberty. The first kind of skepticism entails a healthy suspicion of the ability of government to substitute itself for the prudence, preferences, and good sense of responsible individuals. The second form of skepticism endorses moral and cultural relativism and denies that a rational defense of the principles of the free society is possible. The first form of skepticism protects free peoples against the temptation of collectivism, the second subverts the possibility of any principled distinction between free and tyrannical social and political arrangements.

Epstein's detailed analysis and defense of what Alexis de Tocqueville might have called "skepticism rightly understood" succeeds in vindicating "self-interest" as the inescapable starting point of individual and collective action in a world characterized by scarcity (and, a Christian would add, original sin). But what of the challenges posed by the behavioral sciences and postmodernist philosophy to the very idea of stable individuality and rationally discernible self-interest? Epstein takes on these comers, too, with his characteristic self-assurance. He freely admits that not

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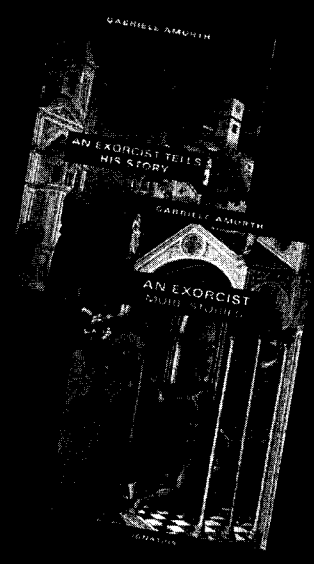

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every individual is able to calculate his interest with absolute clarity at every moment of time. Nonetheless, the freely chosen "preferences" of individuals, restrained by the rule of law and a sense of fair play, are in his view our best bet for allowing hundreds of millions of people to coexist in relative peace and without undue constraint.

Epstein—like the older liberal tradition to which he is indebted—is at his best in describing the salutary role that "interest" plays in individual and collective life. In a classic study of the subject, Albert Hirschman has reminded us that, historically, "interests" were defended by the likes of Adam Smith and Montesquieu as a humanizing substitute for the destructive martial and religious "passions" that tore asunder early modern Europe. Market societies, built upon what Leo Strauss famously called the "low but solid" ground of rational self-interest, have created conditions of civil peace and economic prosperity that are truly unprecedented in the historical adventure of humankind. But if self-interest is a powerful motive of human action, it is of course not the only or highest one.

WHILE EPSTEIN is much less rigid than rational choice theorists who reduce everyone and everything to the sole motive of self-interest (these theorists delight in claiming that even Mother Teresa's behavior can be so explained), he still is not free of the cardinal sin of economic liberalism. His approach "economizes" the affections that connect human beings and make them more than autonomous individuals. To his credit, Epstein does appreciate that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of" in the philosophy of rational self-interest. At times, he takes his fellow political economists to task for failing to appreciate that fellow feeling and a sense of obligation and benevolence sometimes rule the hearts of men. But Epstein is ultimately unable to bring together self-interest and sympathy in a measured account of the motives that orient human action. His excessively individualistic starting point distorts his anthropology. Despite his best efforts, Epstein tends to treat everything outside the realm of self-interest as peripheral to an understanding of the deepest sources of human conduct.

Epstein is at his most impressive in distinguishing salutary skepticism from full-fledged moral relativism.

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In chapters three and four of *Skepticism and Freedom*, he challenges the fashionable relativism of the academy and reveals himself to be an effective practitioner of common-sense moral justifications. His targets include the overrated Oliver Wendell Holmes (who disparaged all moral preferences as arbitrary choices akin to the choice of coffee with or without milk) and the brilliant pragmatist Judge Richard Posner. In a devastating riposte to both, he asks, "Just what is the cash value of a [pragmatist] position that is open to everything and commits to nothing, and takes pride in its elusive quality, and refuses to offer any systematic defense of any institutional arrangements?" Epstein rightly concludes that such pragmatism erodes the moral foundations of the free society.

In contrast to the dogmatic relativism of Holmes and Posner, Epstein rightly affirms that we have no choice but to appeal to common sense and ordinary experience in making moral and political judgments. They are the inescapable foundation of a humane system of liberty and law. Pragmatists such as Posner confuse realism with a "cruel form of moral skepticism" and go much too far in affirming the absolute flexibility of moral judgments. Against the dominant historicism of the age, Epstein does not hesitate to affirm that "boundaries of space and time do not block the free movement of moral discourse across" or within communities. Against cultural relativism, he defends the reality of a moral consensus across societies and history. No "culture" has ever defended the absurd proposition that killing, force, and fraud are choiceworthy in and of themselves. These otherwise illicit deeds must be *justified* before the bars of conscience and the law. Epstein goes so far as to criticize the arguments used in favor of abortion on demand as incompatible with "traditional moral justifications" and as unpersuasive on face value. "The utter dependence of the infant on the mother points to an increased duty of care, not to an increased right to repel or abandon another person." Such judgments surely require great courage in an intellectual climate where the morality of "choice" is simply taken for granted by intellectual and legal elites.

Epstein's defense of individual "autonomy" as the indispensable foundation of the free society therefore does not make him insensitive to traditional moral justifications. But he does not always help himself make his case. For example, he shows little evidence of having thought through the problematic implications of an appeal to human autonomy or to what Bertrand de Jouvenel called the "philosopher's dream" known as the "state of nature." Too often human autonomy is understood to entail an amoral right of "self-ownership" unbeholden to the moral law or to any intrinsic limitations on self-expression. Epstein shows little to no awareness of this difficulty. He unfortunately relies on philosophical categories that imply the debilitating skepticism he rightly argues is incompatible with true liberalism.

Because Epstein's entry into political philosophy is through economic and legal theory, he tends to conceive of state authority in an exclusively negative light. While, for instance, he justifiably faults the welfare state for undermining limited government and for failing to deliver on its promises of alleviating poverty, his hostility keeps him from providing a fuller account of its origins and (perhaps necessary) place in the liberal order. A more balanced approach is taken by Pierre Manent, who has persuasively argued that some version of the welfare state is built into the very logic of political representation in

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free societies, which are continuously animated by an imperfect compromise between a destabilizing drive toward individual "autonomy" and an ordering principle of political "command." Of course, if these "political interventions" are unlimited, they risk undermining the morality of liberalism and weakening the productive engines of a capitalist economy. Yet Epstein goes too far in his exclusive focus on abstract individual rights, including economic liberties, at the expense of the self-government of a democratic people. In light of the inherent complexities of democratic capitalism, Irving Kristol's more moderate position—according to which prudent liberal statecraft involves limiting rather than abolishing the welfare state—is a more sensible one.

ONLY IN THE BRIEF CONCLUSION to the book are citizenship and self-government taken up as explicit themes. There Epstein concedes that "legal and political institutions can only go so far," that "enlightened statesmen," an "informed public," as well as "an informed and deep set of business, political, and intellectual elites" are crucial to the flourishing of a self-confident liberal society. Epstein is thus forced in the end to concede that the classical liberal order depends upon a moral framework that it has difficulty articulating and that it sometimes actively undermines. While we should be grateful to Epstein for highlighting the complex ties that bind skepticism and liberty in the modern world, at the same time, his noble failure teaches us that philosophical liberalism is incapable of doing full justice to the goods that are necessary to sustain a free society. As Tocqueville explained with the greatest penetration, liberal democracy is far richer than the theory that is used to justify it. That is a valuable insight for every season.

Immigration and the Common Culture

MEXIFORNIA: A STATE OF BECOMING. By VICTOR DAVIS HANSON. *Encounter. 150 pp. $21.95.*

Reviewed by Peter C. Meilaender

In his latest work, *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming*, Victor Davis Hanson offers a report from immigration's front lines. An unusual but appealing mix of argument and autobiography, *Mexifornia* provides a compelling—and frightening—portrayal of the transformations that decades of mass immigration have wrought in the cultural and political fabric of California. Hanson's anecdotal account of his own life there—from attending grade school with mostly Mexican-American classmates and working alongside Mexican laborers on his generations-old family farm, to confronting Mexican trespassers stealing fruit or dumping garbage on his property—proves a most effective vehicle for conveying the deep costs our current wave of immigration has brought to his state: crime, poverty, inferior education, ethnic separatism, the creation of a new racial underclass, and a vague but insidious atmosphere of lawlessness and fear.

Critics of immigration have, of course, worried about these consequences since at least the 1980s. Hanson's book is more interesting for his spirited attack on a pair of unlikely allies who bear special responsibility for our current immigration mess: the corporate and libertarian right, and the multiculturalist left. Corporate America, eager for the quick profits of cheap labor but indifferent to the long-term costs for the country, has imported a class of diligent and cheap workers. Somewhere around age forty, however, these once-strong immigrant bodies give out, no longer able to sustain the physical grind of menial labor, leaving behind an ever-growing class of uneducated poor who

PETER C. MEILAENDER, *Assistant Professor of Political Science at Houghton College in New York State, is the author of* Toward a Theory of Immigration *(Palgrave).*

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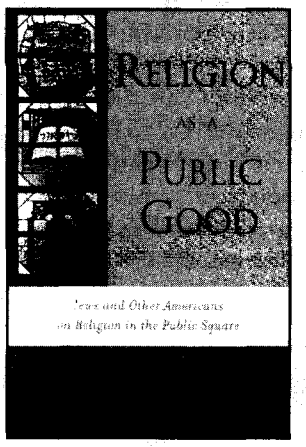

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are dependent for their survival on state assistance or crime and are permanently excluded from the prosperous world of middle-class America, with only their bitterness to bequeath their children. (Given the tendency to dismiss as racist all criticisms of immigration from the right, it is worth emphasizing the considerable empathy with which Hanson describes the plight of these Mexican immigrants.)

Hanson is even more critical, however, of the "race industry" on the multicultural left. Their program of bilingualism and ethnic separatism, combined with an unshakeable faith in the deep racism of mainstream America, divides the state into warring ethnic groups and denies to immigrants the opportunity for the only kind of education—in history and civics, literature and mathematics—that could equip them for success in their new country. Noting persistent Mexican educational failure under the multiculturalist regime, Hanson pointedly writes, "[I]t is now legitimate to question the very motives of some in the . . . movement: do they wish the best for the children of aliens who are poor, or continued spoils for themselves who are affluent?" Indeed.

We should not imagine, though, that Hanson's indictment applies only to agribusiness and multiculturalism. They may have most actively pursued the policies behind our current problems, but many more are complicit in the fiasco. Indeed, confronted by Hanson's criticisms, we all stand in the dock—all of us ordinary Americans who have made "the Devil's bargain . . . to avoid cutting our own lawns, watching our own kids, picking our peaches, laying our tile, and cleaning our toilets." If we think that only others are to blame, we deceive ourselves.

IF THE DECAY runs this deep, what are we to do? Apart from maintaining the disastrous status quo, Hanson offers three alternatives. We could permit continued high levels of legal and illegal immigration, but embark on a serious new program of Americanization, replacing bilingualism and multiculturalism with an insistence on quick assimilation; we could forgo assimilation and make our peace with multiculturalism, but crack down on illegal immigration while also curtailing legal immigration; or—Hanson's preferred approach—we could both restrict immigration and insist upon assimilation by those immigrants who do come.

Having surveyed these possibilities, Hanson ends on a note of guarded optimism: "To recover our state, our region, and ultimately our nation, we still need not do *everything* right." Yet his own arguments underline the difficulty of any of the three alternatives he proposes. This becomes clear from his discussion, in the book's most interesting and provocative chapter, of American popular culture as an engine of assimilation. In spite of having abandoned traditional efforts to assimilate immigrants, we have been granted a reprieve from chaos, Hanson argues, only because American popular culture has proved extraordinarily powerful at incorporating people of all backgrounds into a single global culture that is accessible to all because it rests upon lowest-common-denominator appeals to basic human passions. "Globalization can now unite any two people from the most disparate backgrounds in taste, appearance, and manner of daily life." This has serious costs, because it substitutes "schlock" for real culture, "exchange[s] standards and taste for raw inclusiveness," and at best "gives America a few years of respite before we must deal with the catastrophe that we are not educating millions, not teaching them a common and elevated culture, and not addressing the dilemma of open borders."

At the same time, this popular culture is relentlessly and radically democratic and egalitarian, creating a historically unprecedented situation in which age-old barriers of race, class, and sex are destroyed among a mass of people who wear the same clothes, listen to the same music, watch the same television shows, and buy the same consumer goods. Without these homogenizing effects, Hanson suggests, we could not have gotten away even this long with our unwillingness to promote a more substantial common culture in the face of mass immigration.

Unfortunately, these effects of the popular culture raise deep questions about the possibility of Hanson's various alternatives for righting the ship. Any approach that merely seeks to cut immigration levels without addressing the issue of assimila-

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tion seems bound to fail, for it would leave the task of Americanization to the popular culture. But, as Hanson notes, such "superficial immersion in American culture is no substitute for real civic education about American history, culture, and values." Sustaining a valuable culture does not happen automatically; it requires real work. As Hanson writes, "Our elites do not understand just how rare consensual government is in the history of civilization." If we wish it to endure, we must actively seek to maintain it.

So the only real alternatives are those that include genuine attention to the task of preserving a common culture capable of sustaining self-government. Yet Hanson's discussion of popular culture leaves one deeply pessimistic about the possibility of launching a new program of assimilation. For as familiarity with the historic American culture vanishes behind "the high-decibel magnetism of popular entertainment and its ferocious dumbing-down to the level of easiest comprehension and acceptance," into what exactly do we propose to assimilate newcomers? And who, apart from Hanson and a few others, will know how to do the assimilating? Who will even want to?

Any proposal to give immigrants a "real civic education about American history, culture, and values" presupposes that significant numbers of Americans still know what those are. But Hanson's discussion of the popular culture calls that assumption into question. Despite its optimistic close, Hanson's entire book describes a country in serious moral decline—from the lawless illegal immigrants themselves, to the "race hustlers" who preserve their own power by creating an ethnic clientele of unassimilated dependents; from the agribusiness corporations, chasing quick profits without regard for long-term public consequences, to the ordinary American citizens who, out of laziness or selfishness, insist on cheap gardeners and nannies while leaving their grandchildren to deal with the social effects of illegal immigration. If the possible solutions that Hanson proposes seem, on the evidence of his own arguments, unlikely, that is in part, at least, because he offers no indication of how such decline can be reversed.

IN LIGHT of this moral decline, it is useful to consider what resources religion has to offer in building support for a renewed defense of a common American culture. Whether Hanson himself would agree with the following observations, I do not know, since he does not discuss religion. Nevertheless, his account of our immigration dilemma suggests three main obstacles (the enumeration is mine, not his) to a reassertion of America's cultural and political identity. A culture informed by a Christian sensibility can potentially help counter all three.

The first obstacle is cultural relativism, with its denial that "some other cultures and nations have been not merely different, but often far worse at providing freedom and security for their people." Christian moral principles, by contrast, provide ethical standards for judging between governmental systems or ways of life that do better or worse jobs of permitting human beings to flourish. At the same time, because it emphasizes human fallibility and counsels humility, a Christian outlook guards against triumphalism. It permits us to affirm and defend what is good in our own tradition without insisting that all people everywhere adopt precisely the same tradition.

Hanson's second obstacle to a renewed insistence on assimilation is the corrosive effect of the popular culture already described. By undermining standards of taste and discernment and appealing (through the drive for profit) to those basic human

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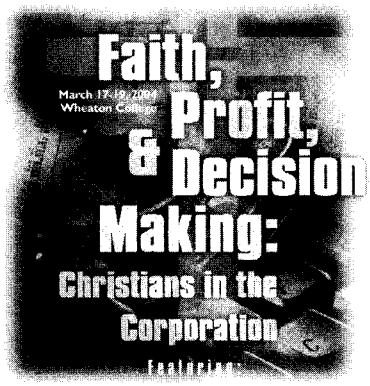
passions shared by the broadest possible audience, it gradually substitutes a culture that is cosmopolitan but low for one more distinctively American. A Christian ethics, by reasserting the importance of standards, can exercise a check on this downward slide and thus reopen a space for maintaining a richer culture, one that elevates us above our lowest instincts. In doing so, it can help us understand (in Burke's famous phrase) that "art is man's nature"—that we become more fully human precisely through the cultural traditions that distinguish us from other peoples, with their own distinctive traditions.

Finally, there is the question of whether we are willing to defend our own way of life. Even if we recognize its value, after all, it need not follow that we think ourselves justified in maintaining it, particularly when doing so requires—as it does in the immigration context—summoning the coercive power of the state (and a relatively privileged state, at that) against needy and vulnerable outsiders in search of a better life. The trend of much contemporary political thought—especially those versions of liberalism (they are not its only versions) that regard all political assertions of cultural norms as "impositions"—is that we are not so justified. The Christian moral tradition, to be sure, regards the use of force against such people as requiring justification. Yet it also reminds us that in addition to our universal obligations to all human beings as humans, we also have, as creatures of time and space, special obligations towards those people with whom we stand in special relationships—family, neighbors, countrymen. In so doing, it helps us see that the preservation of our common life can indeed be a justifiable political endeavor.

Insofar as Christianity remains a vital force in American society, then, it provides potential resources for defending Hanson's proposed policies—and for justifying, at least sometimes, the defense of our common life. Whether that defense is justified in any particular case, of course, calls for careful political and ethical reflection. But if Victor Davis Hanson is right, we had better not reflect too long.



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Sheer Extravagant Violence

TARAS BULBA. By NIKOLAI GOGOL. Translated by Peter Constantine. *Modern Library. 141 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by David B. Hart

Where *Taras Bulba* should be ranked among the works of Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852)—or, for that matter, among the monuments of European literature—is by no means settled. Ernest Hemingway called it "one of the ten greatest books of all time," while Vladimir Nabokov, who adored the Gogol of the St. Petersburg stories and *Dead Souls*, dismissed it as a dull, melodramatic *juvenilium*, on a par with "rollicking yarns about lumberjacks." Of course, neither of these is an authority to be consulted too credulously; when reading their critical verdicts, one can never be certain how deep the one was in his cups, nor how high the other in his dudgeon. The truth is that *Taras*

DAVID B. HART *is an Eastern Orthodox theologian.*

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Bulba is a lesser achievement than the strange, brilliant, delirious works of Gogol's prime; but it is, nevertheless, colored throughout by the inspired exorbitances of his genius.

Originally published as a long short story in 1835, the tale had assumed the dimensions of a short novel by 1842. It is often described as a "prose epic," and Gogol certainly composed it in a Homeric key (blood-steeped battles, rudely eloquent perorations, a prose of studied naïveté, controlled torrents of parataxis, languidly involved similes, plentiful descriptions of insouciant brutality, and a narrative voice blessedly pure of psychological subtleties or moralism). But it also reflects the conventions of the historical romance, and owes as much to Scott and Cooper as to Homer. At its center, in fact, is a love story so implausible in its elements—an absurd coincidence, a girl with the eyesight (apparently) of a falcon, a maidservant able to find one sleeping soldier among thousands in the dead of night, a secret passage into a besieged town—that Ann Radcliffe might have recoiled from it as too fantastic.

The tale is set in the Ukraine, among the Cossacks of the great Zaporozhian Sech (a large fortified island encampment on the river Dnieper). In the new Modern Library edition, both Robert Kaplan's introduction and Peter Constantine's preface place the action "sometime between the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth century," but this is incorrect. The final chapter of the book recounts the Polish campaign of the Zaporozhian Cossacks under the Hetman Ostranitsa, which took place in 1637; and the preceding chapters are set not much earlier.

The story concerns an old married Cossack—the book's eponymous hero—and his two sons, and how all three meet their deaths. By all rights, Bulba should command far less sympathy than he does. His sons have scarcely returned from their seminary training in Kiev when, indifferent to his wife's misery, he leads them off to the Sech. There, after a little while, he grows impatient for a war to try their mettle, and so intrigues to subvert the Sech's armistice with the Turkish Padishah—which proves needless when the Cossacks receive word of Polish outrages against the Russian faithful of the Ukraine, and so ride forth to fight for the "true Church." While Bulba lacks nei-

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ther humanity nor courage, it is soon obvious that his sons' lives are of less account to him than that they acquit themselves honorably in battle; and, in the book's final pages, when moved to vengeance, he proves capable of the most implacable savagery. And yet such is his simplicity of character that he does compel us.

His sons are more uncomplicatedly attractive—especially the younger of them, Andri, who loses his heart to a Polish girl of fairly high social standing. Gogol's portrayal of a young, warlike naïf vanquished in an instant by feminine beauty and grace is quite affecting, as is the heedlessness of Andri's surrender to his passion and renunciation of family, nation, and faith (though this will lead to the novel's most tragic moment). The elder son, Ostap, possesses none of his brother's complexities or susceptibilities; he is simply brave, adept at battle, a natural leader of men, and not given to the more barbarous proclivities of his fellows; and he dies well.

THE MOST INDELIBLE impression left by *Taras Bulba* is one of sheer extravagant violence. The book abounds in descriptions of the manic carnage of battle, starvation, murder, and torture; one reads of men entirely flayed below the knees, of women mutilated or burned alive at church altars, of infants speared, of Jews beaten and killed. And, while this violence is found on all sides, it is the unrelenting brutality of the Cossacks to which we are principally exposed. When, for instance, the Zaporozhians resolve to make war on the Poles, they first round up the Jewish merchants of the settlement (whom they see as allies of their enemies) and throw them into the Dnieper to drown (except for one whom Bulba rescues, in return for a favor once done his brother). The story is set in a sanguinary and sadistic age; but it leaves one with the sense that the Cossacks may ultimately have been unrivalled in their capacity for purely impulsive pitilessness, unlit by the faintest flickering of conscience.

And yet—and this gives the book much of its disturbing allure—Gogol clearly means in some sense to celebrate these men. However monstrous his Cossacks, they are not actually moved by malice, and somehow their cruelty is made to seem less appalling by its absolutely ingenuous spontaneity. It is as if

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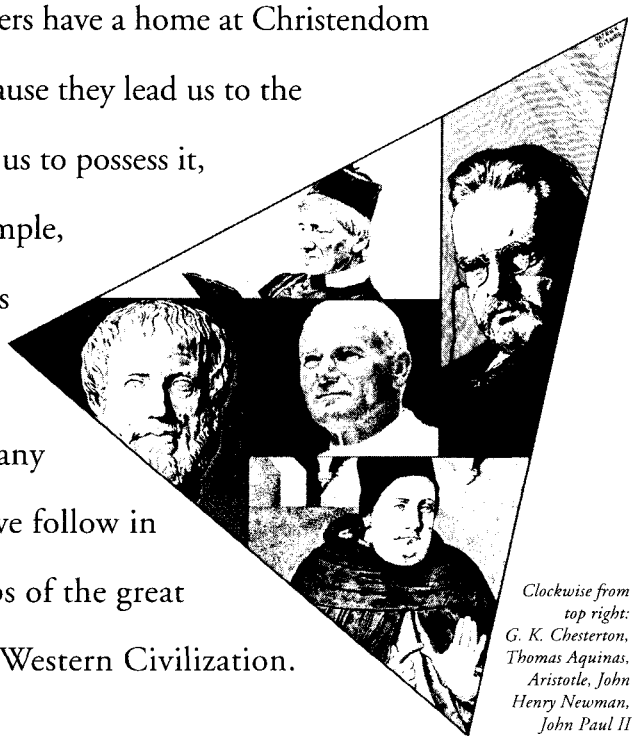

Clockwise from top right: G. K. Chesterton, Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, John Henry Newman, John Paul II

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Gogol sees a kind of animal innocence in their violence, a childlike boisterousness, of a piece with the recklessness that pervades all they do: they hoard treasure, but either forget where they have hidden it or squander it in mighty feats of dissipation; their appetites are titanic; they are generous to a degree, and to a greater degree merely profligate; they love heroic song; they slaughter their enemies with industrious gaiety.

Most importantly, Gogol sees his Zaporozhians not only as legendary heroes, but as knights of faith. He does not actually *approve* of their barbarity; but he sees them as having been created by centuries of religious and political crisis, as a reaction against forces threatening to destroy the Christian heritage of the Rus. Whereas other nations saw the Cossacks as something dark and terrible at the Asiatic periphery of Christian Europe, Gogol saw them as embodying something vast, invincible, and indomitably savage in the Russian soul: an unyielding spiritual bulwark against Orthodoxy's enemies.

It was in the south, after all, that Christianity established itself in Russia, in the late tenth century (which led to Kievan culture's brief flowering); but by 1240, all of Russia had fallen to the Tatars, who would rule the north for 250 years. The south was purged of its occupiers in the fourteenth century by the pagan Lithuanian Prince Gedimin, who permitted the Slavs the practice of their faith; but the conversion and marriage into the Polish royal family of the Lithuanian Prince Yagello in 1386 inaugurated the long history of Poland's attempt to absorb Lithuania and its possessions. In 1569, the Union of Lublin made "Little Russia" an appanage of the Polish crown, and the elaborate Polish culture of aristocratic privilege (including an absolute claim on property rights) was imposed upon a people accustomed to more spacious liberties. Then, with the "uniate" accommodation of 1595, the Ukraine's "official" Church became an Eastern rite of the Roman Church, which reduced the Orthodox to religious outlaws in their own country.

The Cossacks appeared at the end of the thirteenth century; the vast open plains of southern Russia provided no natural brake against invaders from any quarter—Turk, Tatar, or Pole—and only these loosely organized but formidable sodalities of "Christian warriors"

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secured for the Russians some measure of liberty on their own soil. By the time of the events recounted in *Taras Bulba*, the Ukraine's Orthodox Russians saw themselves as a disinherited people, whose oppressor despised their faith and coveted their lands. Hence the blazing ferocity of Gogol's Zaporozhians, and their ability to see their merciless rampages as "holy war." And hence, also, Gogol's strange sympathy for men of such bestial aptitudes.

I AM NOT wholly enamored of Peter Constantine's new translation. It suffers on occasion from a certain awkwardness of phrasing, and at times from a rather jarring incongruity of tone—as when the old, fairly rusticated Atamen of the Cossack horde assures his men that Catholic priests do nothing but "pontificate"—and on occasion from a ponderous literality. And solecisms such as calling the Orthodox liturgy a "mass" are mildly distracting. That said, Constantine does largely succeed at capturing the terse lyricism of Gogol's descriptions, and the unfaltering flow of the narrative. And, perhaps more importantly, he is better than previous translators at conveying the novel's humor.

This is a considerable virtue, for the aspect of *Taras Bulba* that generally goes unremarked is its willful absurdity. The book is an epic romance, true; but Gogol was not a simple sentimentalist, and one need not be preternaturally astute to notice that his admiration for the Cossacks contains an element of grave mockery. A certain removed and satirical tone pervades the book, and at times breaks forth with full brio. For instance, the entire scene in which Bulba attempts—with the assistance of the Jewish merchant he spared earlier—to visit his son on the eve of the latter's execution, but is thwarted by a guard with a "three-tiered mustache," is one of broad comedy. And when, the next day, the narrative drifts through the crowd assembled for the spectacle, and alights upon a butcher and the swordsmith he calls brother "because the two got drunk in the same tavern," one is not far from the surreally irrelevant detail of *Dead Souls*. And then there is the Polish aristocrat, delicately preparing his daughter for the day's events:

> "When [the executioner] puts the criminal on the wheel and starts torturing him the criminal is still alive, but when he chops his head off, my sweet, then the criminal is dead. At first you will see the criminal writhing and shouting, but once his head has been chopped off he won't be able to shout, or eat, or drink. This, my sweet, is because he won't have a head anymore."

Even at its most "epic," Gogol's voice is incapable of strict sobriety. When a girl's sorrow or a warrior's death is likened to a breeze playing in dry reeds or a hawk killing a quail, and the simile runs on long enough to acquire a brief life of its own, the tone is suitably Homeric; but what is one to make of this?—

> [Kukubenko's] young blood gushed like a rare wine brought in a crystal decanter by a careless servant, who stumbles, breaking the precious carafe, the wine spilling onto the floor, the master tearing his hair, for this was the wine he had been saving for the most important occasion of his life, the day when by God's grace he met once more the beloved comrades of his youth to reminisce of bygone times when men knew how to revel.

That is the Gogol of the St. Petersburg period—as is the brief parody of a medieval heroic tableau (Kukubenko's soul ascending to Christ's right hand) that follows.

For these passages alone, Constantine's can be embraced as the standard English translation. Properly to appreciate *Taras Bulba*, one must grasp what a promiscuous

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miscellany of styles and devices it comprises, and what a tour de force of intricate ambiguities it truly is. For this, finally, is why it can keep company with Gogol's maturer masterpieces: it, like them, is a strange, grim, whimsical, and fabulous tale, immersed in an aesthetic idiom unlike any other, and born from perhaps the most peculiar sensibility in the history of European letters.

Baptizing Middle-Earth

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO TOLKIEN: VISIONS OF THE KINGDOM IN MIDDLE-EARTH. By RALPH C. WOOD. *Westminster/John Knox. 169 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Reviewed by Anna Mathie

J. R. R. Tolkien once wrote ruefully, "Being a cult figure in one's own lifetime I am afraid is not at all pleasant." His popularity still has its unpleasant side effects. The peculiar enthusiasms of many of his fans, the existence of fantasy as a lurid paperback genre, and the flavor of the recent movie adaptations have given *The Lord of the Rings* a frivolous or even Dungeons-and-Dragons image, in spite of Tolkien's own seriousness both as a writer and as a Catholic. Ralph C. Wood's *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-Earth* seeks to counter this trend. Wood examines *The Lord of the Rings* "to trace the way it discloses . . . the principal claims of Christian faith." He calls his project "not a scholarly study so much as a theological meditation on *The Lord of the Rings*."

Wood begins with a consideration of Tolkien's cosmology. With St. Thomas Aquinas and the Christian theological tradition, Tolkien sees the universe both as intrinsically hierarchical and intrinsically good. Some created beings are nobler than others, but all are good: wizards, high-elves, dwarves, hobbits. A hobbit is not a failed or faulty creation because he is not an elf or a man, and Tolkien's wiser characters know this. Even lowly inanimate things are good: the hobbits' love of eating and drinking together is not despicable but healthy. Cakes, ale, and pipeweed are even magical, in their own way. Indeed, as Wood points out, one of the chief virtues of fantasy is its power to make us see the ordinary things of the world, and the world itself, as new, strange, and wonderful.

For Tolkien, as for St. Augustine, evil is not a positive reality, but a falling-away from the reality the creator planned for the creature. He speaks of evil as a marring of what was made, and as a shadow. All beings have been created good, even Sauron and his orcs. They fall away from their intended goodness by rejecting what their maker intended for them. In the *Silmarillion*, the demonic Melkor first sins by inventing his own dissonance instead of singing the part God gave him in the angelic harmony. Rejecting one's own created nature is the original sin. Lesser beings also sin by trying to re-create themselves. Part of why the Ring tempts mortals so strongly is its promise to let them escape the physical mortality God has intended for them. The sinner seeks a more independent existence, but he ends up losing his individuality. The Ring-wraiths fade to shadows and puppets of Sauron. Gollum falls so far that he loses his true

ANNA MATHIE *is a graduate student of philosophy at the Catholic University of America.*

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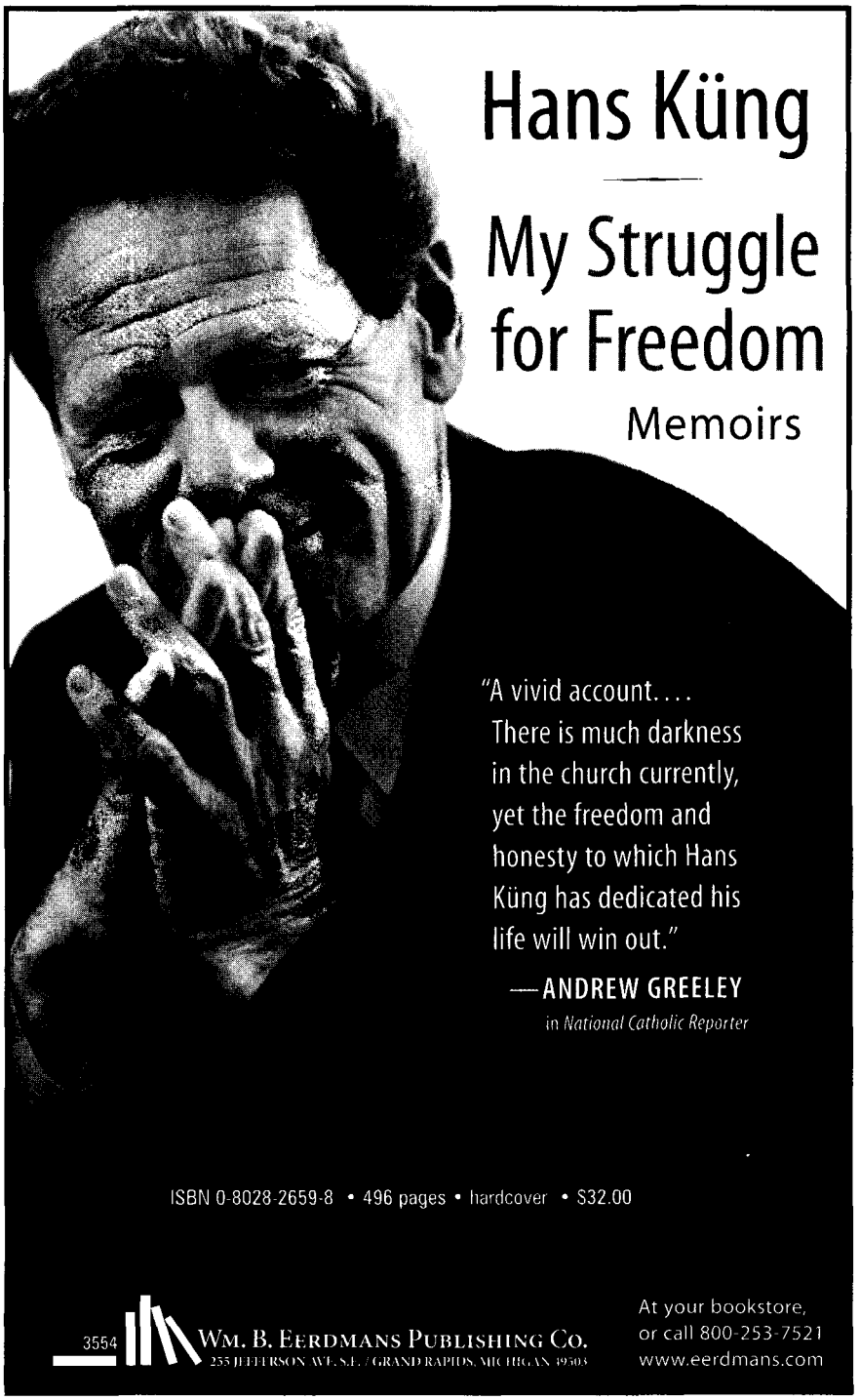
name and even his nature, scarcely remaining a hobbit.

Tolkien's heroes use ancient weapons against evil: they strive for and often exemplify the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. In this, Tolkien is no more Christian than all the philosophers who have followed Plato in praising these virtues, or than the pagans whose folklore he himself studied. However, in Tolkien's world, these natural virtues take on a Christian character. Here a simple-minded hobbit can make a wiser choice than a sophisticated aristocrat of Gondor because of his humility. Justice is tempered with a mercy that a pagan would not comprehend. Again and again, Gollum is spared his just punishment because of pity. At first the hobbits are as shocked by this pity as pagans would be, but in the end it saves the quest when Gollum destroys the Ring.

Courage, too, becomes Christian in this story. The quest to destroy the Ring has almost no chance of success, but the fellowship does not set out in pagan fatalism. Rather, they have an almost Christian hope in what is not seen. Hope is what makes some characters persevere more courageously than others: it is what makes Gandalf a better general than Denethor, and Sam more constant than Frodo.

Temperance, too, becomes supernatural in this story; Sam and Frodo are purified, not by mere moderation, but by painful and heroic self-denial. Wood also makes the interesting observation that peaceful acceptance of death and the unknown is part of temperance for mortals.

Tolkien depicts the natural virtues as perfected and fulfilled by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Naturally, it is a fulfilment that remains shadowy and mysterious to the inhabitants of this pre-Christian world, especially the hobbits. In moments of great danger, Frodo and Sam pray, but without any conscious understanding of what they are doing. When Gandalf speaks of faith and hope to Frodo before the quest begins, telling him he should take comfort in knowing that someone besides Sauron meant him to have the Ring, Frodo does not understand him. Only much later do he and Sam realize that their experience is part of a greater story in which they can place their faith. Similarly, in the beginning Frodo disapproves of Bilbo's pity and charity towards Gollum; later he risks his own life to save Gollum. As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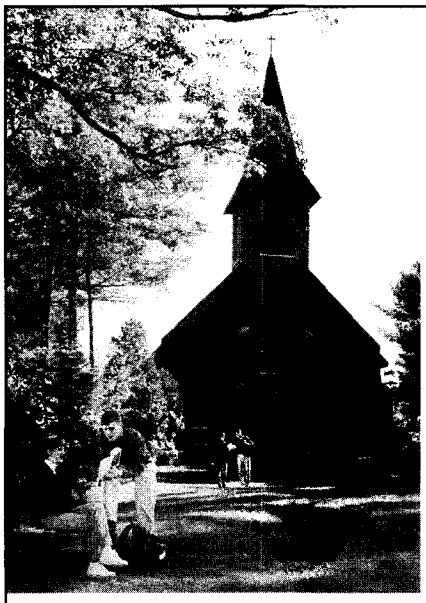
Wood points out, this pity is at the heart of the story: we hear in all three volumes that "the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many." Pity is not a mere feeling here but a duty, as Gandalf sternly tells Frodo: "Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgment. For even the very wise cannot see all ends." The pity he commands is closely akin to the forgiveness of Christian charity.

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL CHAPTERS of *The Gospel According to Tolkien* are those that illustrate this co-dependence of natural and Christian virtues (although they might be more readable and enjoyable if they were not always so relentlessly biblical). When Wood moves on to try to find more explicit statements of Christian doctrine, he is much less convincing. Tolkien's distaste for allegory is well known. He strenuously resisted being read as some kind of theological encoder; as he wrote in a letter, "I don't feel under any obligation to make my story fit with formalized Christian theology, though I actually intended it to be consonant with Christian thought and belief." Wood knows this, but he falls increasingly into such readings towards the end of his book, even searching Tolkien's posthumously published jottings for evidence that the author imagined or even planned an Incarnation in Middle-Earth, concluding: "It is neither idle nor fantastic, I believe, to imagine Ilúvatar entering Arda in the form of a hobbit. The average Jew of Jesus' day was perhaps little if any larger than Tolkien's hobbits. Yet it is from such hobbit-souls that the kingdom of God is truly made."

In *The Mind of the Maker*, Dorothy Sayers wrote that "it is desirable to bear in mind—when dealing with the human maker at any rate—that his chosen way of revelation is through his works. To persist in asking, as so many of us do, 'What did you mean by this book?' is to invite bafflement: the book itself is what the writer means." Literary criticism that seeks a "teaching" in fiction can be worthwhile, but it is a delicate and difficult business. Wood's baptism of every element of the story often drowns the story itself, washing away any truths that are not specifically Christian.

To take one example among



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many, when he discusses the battle-joy of the Rohirrim, Wood jumps almost immediately to the conclusion that Tolkien is advocating just war theory and sanctioning war "only for defensive, non-retaliatory purposes, and in behalf of the freedom and civility that war may sometimes secure." No doubt Tolkien would agree with the moral conclusion expressed here, but as a reading of the story it rather misses the point. The moment of unexpected beauty when we hear that "the host of Rohan burst into song, and they sang as they slew, for the joy of battle was on them, and the sound of their singing that was fair and terrible came even to the City" arises from a truth, not about Christians, but about men, and perhaps not only about virtuous men, either.

Wood generally treats human friendship and trust as specifically Christian virtues. He also seems to infer from Tolkien's affection for the Shire that it is a Christian vision of utopia. Tom Bombadil is treated the same way. Because he cannot fit the character into a Christian cosmology, Wood concludes that "Bombadil may be Tolkien's own monkish gift to Ilúvatar—a creature not meant for our understanding but for the enjoyment of God alone." I don't exactly know what this would mean: perhaps it would make Tolkien some sort of mystic, but it would also make him an inferior storyteller. If Tom Bombadil belongs in the story, it is because he is part of the story's truth as a story, not because he conveys some coded message.

It's not that stories don't mean anything, but they mean something as stories, and Wood's approach often obscures this kind of meaning more than it illuminates. This is disappointing, especially since in an earlier book, *The Comedy of Redemption*, Wood discussed Christian authors with great sensitivity and perceptiveness about their intentions as artists. He may have changed his approach because of a difference in his intended audience: the Tolkien book seems primarily intended for use in undergraduate courses on religion and popular culture, or in church youth and study groups. (It is being marketed as part of a series begun by *The Gospel According to Peanuts*.) Perhaps Wood insists on finding such an explicit blueprint for Christian life in Tolkien's book because his primary intention is catechetical, but I suspect such an approach is counterproductive even in this sphere. Although I am a Catholic, I find it irritating to be told repeatedly that the elven-bread lembas is "eucharist-like." I imagine the eucharistically unconvinced would find it even more irritating.

Certainly grace builds on nature, but we need to let nature be nature before we start building. We need to know what natural wisdom, justice, courage, temperance, and friendship are before we can know them as supernatural. Dorothy Sayers put it this way: "This is the weakness of most 'edifying' or 'propaganda' literature. There is no diversity. The Energy is active only in one part of the whole, and in consequence the wholeness is destroyed and the power diminished. You cannot, in fact, give God His due without giving the devil his due also." Tolkien did not write such propaganda, but a reader of Wood's book might think so. His praiseworthy intention is to send his readers "back to the story itself in eager desire." He could have done that better if he had been more willing to give the devil his due.

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THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD: THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF THE UNIVERSE IN WESTERN THOUGHT. By RÉMI BRAGUE. Translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan. *University of Chicago Press. 228 pp. $35.*

Rémi Brague, a French philosopher and philologist, has composed a fascinating history of Western thought's interaction with the universe. Brague traces various views of the cosmos through major schools of philosophical thought and religious insight—Judaic, Christian, and Islamic—and also examines the impact of modern science on human self-perception. Central to the dominant philosophy that emerged in each era is man's perception of his place in relation to the whole, whether looking up at the sky and seeing himself subject to outside forces or looking within himself for guidance, which Brague identifies as the advent of Abrahamic faith. Biblical religion effectively freed man from inanimate forces of nature but at the same time allowed for a metaphysical appreciation of the grandeur of his Creator. The high point of this confluence and reciprocity between outer and inner wisdom is reflected in the writings of the Church Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas among Christians, and the commentaries of Maimonides among the Jews. In the modern period, the use of telescopes revealed a lack of completeness and chaos in the cosmos, while the microscope uncovered a violent world of nature that was far from good or virtuous. These Enlightenment discoveries inspired the amoral philosophy of Hobbes and finally the nihilism of Nietzsche, as humanity experienced a loss of a cosmic anchor. For philosophers, theologians, and historians—and, indeed, all those interested in the most far-reaching and profound issues of human life and meaning—Brague's book is highly recommended.

—Fr. Michael P. Orsi

AN AMERICAN CONVERSION: ONE MAN'S DISCOVERY OF BEAUTY AND TRUTH IN TIMES OF CRISIS. By DEAL HUDSON. *Crossroad. 192 pp. $22.95.*

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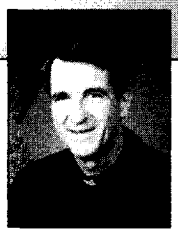

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reflects the subtitle, but not the title. As a Southern Baptist, and minister of the same, the author chafed under the divorce of piety from aesthetics and the life of the mind. Bit by bit, with a hesitance interspersed by leaps of grace he does not presume to explain, he came to embrace another way of being Christian. Thomas Aquinas, George Herbert, Jacques Maritain, Louis Bouyer, and other masters were decisive in his being wooed by the Catholicism to which he finally succumbed. Elegantly written and a pleasure to read, this is the tale of an American who was converted and is, as he knows, still on the way of being converted. But one might argue that, in his preoccupation with beauty and truth, Hudson's experience is in sharp contrast to what, in our confused religious culture of feel-good spiritualities, would be a typical "American" conversion.

RUMSFELD: A PERSONAL PORTRAIT. By MIDGE DECTER. *HarperCollins. 220 pp. $24.95.*

Do not expect a disinterested biography. Midge Decter loves and admires the man. This is a friend who wants others to know her friend as she does. Donald Rumsfeld is a native midwesterner (as is Decter), a Princetonian, an extraordinarily successful businessman; he was a Washington mover and shaker long before his current stint as Secretary of Defense. Although he has many detractors, he has also become a celebrity, with all the ambiguities attending that status. Decter explores with rare sensitivity what the Rumsfeld phenomenon might mean not only for the military and U.S. foreign policy but for our culture. She suggests that the response to him may indicate a rejuvenation of old-fashioned virtues such as courage, hard work, self-confidence, devotion to family, and, by no means least, what it means for a man to be manly. On the last point, Decter returns to questions of gender relations, as they are vulgarly called, a subject to which she has made many valuable contributions over the years. *Rumsfeld* is as fascinating as a dinner conversation sparked by the questions, "Tell me, what is he really like, and will he really make a difference?"

THE SPLENDOR OF FAITH: THE THEOLOGICAL VISION OF POPE JOHN PAUL II. By AVERY CARDINAL DULLES. *Herder & Herder. 276 pp. $29.95.*

A revised and significantly expanded edition of an indispensable guide to the thought of John Paul II. It seems likely that the major teaching initiatives of this pontificate are now complete, and Dulles provides, in relatively short compass, a comprehensive view of the whole. Dulles writes: "Guided by his philosophical studies and his experience of the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II has forged a Christocentric humanism and a dynamic personalism capable of encountering and respectfully challenging all opposing ideologies and spiritual movements. The Catholic Church and, I submit, the world have been greatly blessed by the intellectual leadership of this brilliant, energetic, and prayerful successor of Peter." The task now is to digest and apply his many contributions.

LESSONS OF THE MASTERS. By GEORGE STEINER. *Harvard University Press. 196 pp. $19.95.*

Steiner, who, with justice, has no doubt that he is a master teacher, herewith bestows his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, delivered in 2001-02. Few can match Steiner's panache in the display of erudition and self-confidence ("I have students on five continents") that is evident on almost every page. For instance: "Compare the first version of Karl Barth's commentary on Letter to the Romans. Spengler may hover in the margin (Heidegger lectures on Spengler in April 1920). But such possible kinship falls short of the facts. The 'enormity' of Heidegger's *Sprachschöpfung*, of his 'language creation,' enormity in originality and dimension as well, arguably, as in monstrosity, has only one precedent (of which Heidegger was acutely conscious): that of Martin Luther. One day, perhaps, we may come to understand what tectonic shifts of consciousness, what crises in the meaning of meaning made possible, necessitated at roughly the same period, *Sein und Zeit*, *Finnegans Wake*, and exercises in Gertrude Stein." The connecting of improbable dots in world literature and philosophy is great fun, even if the argument of the book is somewhat thin, namely, that there is a strong erotic (and frequently homoerotic) dynamic in the teacher-student relationship, and teachers have a great, indeed sacred, responsibility for the successor generation. In the Acknowledgments we are told, "Throughout, the companionship in teaching and in study of my wife, Dr. Zara Steiner, has been exemplary." It appears the master has given her an A+. In these lectures, George Steiner, who frequently joins insight to erudition, mainly settles for erudition.

THE AMERICAN WAY: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN THE SHAPING OF THE AMERICAN IDENTITY. By ALLAN CARLSON. *ISI. 250 pp. $15 paper.*

Increasingly being mainstreamed is the importance of marriage and family as it is discovered that neither women nor anyone else can "have it all." Decisions must be made, and in this intriguing history Carlson demonstrates that the perduringly American decision, distinguishing

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America from the "Old Europe," is in favor of what he calls the child-rich family. *The American Way* provides a solid historical foundation for understanding today's controversies over what it means to be "pro-family."

FOOTBRIDGE TOWARDS THE OTHER. By JOHN MCNERNEY. *Continuum. 176 pp. $29.95 paper.*

The chaplain of University College, Dublin, provides a fresh reading of John Paul II's philosophy and poetry, making the argument that he has succeeded in synthesizing Thomism and phenomenology in a strikingly new way. Of particular interest to students of philosophy and the thought of Karol Wojtyla.

IN DENIAL: HISTORIANS, COMMUNISM, AND ESPIONAGE. By JOHN EARL HAYNES and HARVEY KLEHR. *Encounter. 316 pp. $25.95.*

The authors, who have been in the lead of researching the archives of the late Soviet Union, here turn their attention to American academics who still today engage in "revisionist" whitewashing of Stalinism in the hope of creating a myth of a noble "lost cause" that was done in by anti-Communists. Suggestive parallels are drawn between these anti-anti-Communists and Holocaust deniers.

C. S. LEWIS AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. By JOSEPH PEARCE. *Ignatius. 175 pp. $14.95.*

Pearce, who has written extensively on twentieth-century converts to Catholicism, makes a plausible argument that Lewis would have been among them if he could have seen what would happen to the Anglicanism to which he adhered. Protestant fans of Lewis might be inspired to offer a rebuttal.

Ledges

I need more ledges in my life
to put things on
to lean on
ledges for opened books you're reading
for periodicals and bills
and things like that
spread out
so you can find them
drawers are a pain because
that's where you lose them
ledges are like arms
there to hold out to you
like an offering
all the stuff you accumulate
in this overloaded world
not that it would be a great to-do
by any means
to suffer their loss
but given the way things are
just now
I need more ledges in my life

Bernard Scoll

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture, and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

THE CULTURE WARS GO INTERNATIONAL

The defenders of judicial activism, properly understood as the judicial usurpation of politics, count on wearing down their critics over time. Robert H. Bork is not easily worn down. He returns to the battle with a new book, *Coercing Virtue: The Worldwide Rule of Judges* (AEI, 159 pp., $25). Not only in America but throughout the nations of the West, judges have seized the political authority that properly belongs to the people and their elected representatives. Bork's opening chapter on this "permanent revolution" carries an apt epigraph by James Madison: "I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpation." While Bork has written extensively on judicial imperialism, in these pages and elsewhere, the present book addresses the international dimensions of the problem, illustrating his argument with fascinating studies of the politics of law in the United Nations, Canada, and Israel.

"Judicial activism," Bork writes, "results from the enlistment of judges on one side of the culture war in every Western nation. Despite denials by some that any such conflict exists, the culture war is an obtrusive fact. It is a struggle between the cultural or liberal left and the great mass of citizens who, left to their own devices, tend to be traditionalists. The courts are enacting the agenda of the cultural left." Such judges belong to the New Class whose members select, reinforce, and reward one another on the assumption that they know better than ordinary people how we ought to live. They have few compunctions about making up law in order to coerce others into conforming with their understanding of virtue. Bork supplies instance after instance of this process at work in the U.S., with particular reference to the Supreme Court, and shows the ways in which we are now facing a "transnational culture war." He writes, "Courts possess very potent powers, both coercive and moral. Although that power is asserted over an entire culture, it is not always dramatic because it proceeds incrementally, but since the increments accumulate, it is all the more potent for that. What judges have wrought is a coup d'etat—slow-moving and genteel, but a coup d'etat nonetheless."

Countries belonging to the United Nations, many of them antidemocratic and downright tyrannical, cooperate with Western nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in creating international laws in order to impose upon their countries measures that they know they could not win by democratic means. "International law," says Bork, "is not law but politics. For that reason, it is dangerous to give the name 'law,' which summons up respect, to political struggles that are essentially lawless." The international New Class is often deeply anti-American and works hand-in-glove with American NGOs that are hostile to the morality of their own society. The result is that "international law becomes one more weapon in the domestic culture war." The U.S. Supreme Court has also taken to citing the authority of foreign courts. In one risible instance, in a case having to do with delays in execution, Justice Stephen G. Breyer invoked decisions by the Privy Council of Jamaica and the supreme courts of India and Zimbabwe.

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The Supreme Court appeals to a "living Constitution" and "evolving" social standards, but it is mainly the judiciary that is doing the evolving. Bork quotes Justice Antonin Scalia: "What secret knowledge, one must wonder, is breathed into lawyers when they become Justices of this Court, that enables them to discern that a practice which the text of the Constitution does not clearly proscribe, and which our people have regarded as constitutional for two hundred years, is in fact unconstitutional? . . . Day by day, case by case, [the Court] is busy designing a Constitution for a country I do not recognize." Bork comments: "What we call conservatism on the Court is usually a mere holding action; liberals set the agenda and conservatives resist but rarely roll back prior liberal rulings or advance any agenda of their own. The result is a steady movement, occasionally delayed for the moment, of the Constitution to the cultural left."

Conservative Holding Actions

The chapter on Canada's 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms is withering. The Canadian courts have interpreted the Charter to mean that any legislation can be challenged by anyone who has shown "a general interest in the validity of the legislation and that there is no other reasonable and effective manner in which the issue may be brought before the Court." This practically guarantees that all issues are subject to judicial rather than political resolution. And, of course, that is what has happened with the court-imposed law regarding same-sex marriage. True, the Charter has a "notwithstanding" clause whereby the legislature can, for a time, block the implementation of court-made law. The idea of the clause is to check runaway courts, but, for complicated reasons, the clause has fallen into desuetude. The mere existence of such a checking power, Bork contends, is used to encourage judicial adventurism. "The mystique of the courts is too great," he observes. The power to challenge the courts exists on paper, but the political costs of using it are simply too high.

Israel is the supreme example of judicial imperialism securely entrenched. Bork writes: "Imagine, if you can, a supreme court that has gained the power to choose its own members, wrested control of the attorney general from the executive branch, set aside legislation and executive action when there were disagreements about policy, altered the meaning of enacted law, forbidden government action at certain times, ordered government action at other times, and claimed and exercised the authority to override national defense measures. Imagine as well a supreme court that has created a body of constitutional law despite the absence of an actual constitution. . . . Israel's Supreme Court has done them all." The court is decidedly on the side of a post-Zionism that has broken with the founding ideas of Israel. Aharon Barak, President of the Supreme Court, has blithely decreed that, in cases of disagreement, "the views of the enlightened community in Israel" must prevail, and the court gets to decide who is and who is not "enlightened." Bork's judgment is grim: "Israel has set a standard for judicial imperialism that can probably never be surpassed, and, one devoutly hopes, will never be equaled elsewhere. The sad irony is that the Supreme Court, operating with a Basic Law that specifies Israel's values are both Jewish and democratic, is gradually producing an Israel that is neither Jewish nor democratic."

Much of what Bork says in *Coercing Virtue* he has said before. The important contribution of the book is to put the dynamics of judicial imperialism into an international context. "If we do not understand the worldwide corruption of the judicial function, we do not comprehend the full scope of the political revolution that is overtaking the West," he writes. "The political revolution in Western nations is the gradual but unceasing replacement of government by elected officials with government by appointed judges." Perhaps the revolution was inevitable. "Wherever there is judicial review, two forces are placed in opposition: the democratic principle of the elected branches of government and the antidemocratic principle of the judiciary." Today, the antidemocratic principle is "ascendant and aggressive." "The crucial question for all nations that desire to remain self-governing is how to tame and limit the antidemocratic aggressions of their judiciaries and of the international tribunals and forums we are so blithely and thoughtlessly creating."

That is where Judge Bork leaves the matter. He undoubtedly knows that readers will complain that he does not propose a clear remedy. His job in the present book is diagnostic rather than prescriptive. It is said that it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. But one recalls again that, in the absence of a candle, it is sometimes important to curse the darkness, just to make sure that we do not resign ourselves to it. Both domestically and internationally, the forces advancing the judicial usurpation of politics are formidable. But so also is the core conviction of democracy that "just government is derived from the consent of the governed." It is by no means certain but one may be permitted to hope that there are still leaders possessed of sufficient wisdom and courage to give political effect to that conviction.

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"CATHOLIC SECTARIANISM"

Intelligent and good people can end up taking wrongheaded positions, which is a point underscored by Paul Griffiths in taking a wrongheaded position on same-sex marriage. Griffiths, a frequent contributor to these pages who holds the Catholic Studies chair at the University of Illinois, Chicago, argues in *Commonweal* that Catholics should not oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage and, indeed, may well support it. Don't get him wrong; Griffiths is not a conventional "progressive" given to ignoring church authority. He has read very carefully the July 2003 instruction from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) stating that same-sex unions are contrary to Catholic teaching and should be strongly opposed. Griffiths writes, "Catholics are bound to show at least *obsequium religiosum*, religiously submissive respect or deference, to magisterial teaching like that found in the CDF's document." He understands himself to be simply raising questions aimed at "contributing to the further clarification of the Church's mind over time while still maintaining submissive deference to what is taught. This is the ordinary process by which the Church's teaching develops."

Griffiths underscores that he is an "orthodox Catholic," and offers an elegantly phrased argument, the gist of which is that "the public culture of the United States is now profoundly pagan, opposed in almost every significant particular to what the Church advocates as a justly ordered society," and, since the Church's understanding of marriage is so distinctive, complex, and humanly beautiful, it should not be debased or compromised by "entanglement" with a pagan society's marriage laws. So let the pagan society go its way on marriage, including same-sex unions, and let the Church be true to herself. The happy result, he says, "would clarify Catholic teaching about marriage, help Catholics to live in accord with it, make it more attractive to non-Catholics, and so, in the end, conform the body politic more closely to Christ by making the Church more seductively beautiful."

In the same issue, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels offers a stiff rejoinder to Griffiths, pointing out that the understanding of marriage as a life-long covenanted union between a man and woman is not uniquely Catholic. It is shared by other Christians, Jews, and, indeed, people of almost every culture and religion. "Withdrawal from public debate on the definition of marriage or any other publicly contested issue," writes Steinfels, "is the gesture of sectarians—a perennial temptation of certain Protestant groups, and now of some Catholics, both right and left, as well as the newly self-styled 'orthodox Catholics.'" The sneer quotes around "orthodox Catholics" are unseemly, and on most questions of Catholic moment I am closer to Paul Griffiths than Margaret Steinfels, but she is right about the dangers of "Catholic sectarianism."

Moreover, throughout his argument Griffiths assumes that this "profoundly pagan" society is moving toward same-sex marriage, when, in fact, there is massive popular opposition to such a change and the only chance of its happening, as its proponents are keenly aware, is through the dictate of courts. The proposed Federal Marriage Amendment intends to maintain marriage as what most Americans believe marriage is and should be, even if many betray that belief in practice. To speak of America as a deeply pagan or post-Christian culture is a convenient way to abdicate responsibility for what is, in troubling fact, an incorrigibly, conflictedly, and confusedly Christian society.

Griffiths also overlooks the fact that in the Catholic understanding—an understanding shared by many others—marriage is part of the natural order, created and blessed by God. As the Code of Canon Law puts it, "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring." To which is added, "This covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament." By concentrating exclusively on sacramental marriage, Griffiths ignores the responsibility of the Church to teach and protect the meaning of marriage in the natural order. This is an error hardly limited to Paul Griffiths, and it has worked considerable mischief, not least in the sometimes promiscuous granting of annulments in the U.S.

Then there is the question of what is meant by *obsequium religiosum* when one publicly contends that the Magisterium is wrong about a Catholic's public moral duty. It is important to state Griffith's argument fairly. He writes, "I conclude that Catholics may support the legalization of same-sex marriages, together with the progressive disentanglement of sacramental marriage from state-sponsored contractual marriage." He might say that he is not actually contradicting or rejecting the CDF instruction since it does not explicitly address the second part of his conclusion, namely, the disentanglement from civil marriage law. In truth, however, the instruction, backed by centuries of Catholic teaching and practice, assumes a desired compatibility between church and civil law on marriage. And behind that assumption are centuries of Catholic teaching and practice related to the proper relationship between Church and culture.

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In this and every society, there is much that is opposed to, much that is compatible with, and much that is supportive of what, in Griffiths' words, "the Church advocates as a justly ordered society." In recent history, the complexity of our circumstance and our duties is admirably addressed in documents such as the 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus* and the 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. In these and numerous other magisterial statements, the point is that we are enjoined to advocate, as effectively as we can, a justly ordered society. The alternative is to abandon society to its "profoundly pagan" fate, in the hope that a few brands will be rescued from the fire by the attraction of the Church's countercultural witness. In his *Commonweal* article, Professor Griffiths is taking on much more than a disagreement over same-sex marriage. But I expect he knows that.

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MARTIN MARTY'S MARTIN LUTHER

We can be grateful that an editor of Viking's Penguin Lives suggested that the series should include "Martin Luther by Martin Marty" (*Martin Luther*, 199 pp., $19.95). For all the academic and popular attention paid Luther, Marty says there are only three or four biographies in print in English. Now there are four or five. Marty, an influential church historian now emeritus at the University of Chicago, is himself a Lutheran pastor, and he has produced a portrait of the founder that is deeply and instructively ambivalent. Contra some contemporary Luther scholarship, Marty stays with the conventional portrayal of a distraught and guilt-ridden soul in search of a gracious God. "He makes most sense as a wrestler with God," Marty writes, "indeed, as a God-obsessed seeker of certainty and assurance in a time of social trauma and of personal anxiety, beginning with his own."

Luther exulted in his gift for complexifying. Marty writes, "Explain his life story as one will, it makes sense chiefly as one rooted in and focused by what has to be called an obsession with God: God present and God absent, God too near and God too far, the God of wrath and the God of love, God weak and God almighty, God real and God as illusion, God hidden and God revealed." The Church taught that the sacrament of confession required that the sinner be contrite. "That sounded like a simple idea—to be contrite meant to be sorry for sins, as Luther was—but he rendered it complex." What if contrition is self-centered and selfish, aimed at securing forgiveness? How could one know if he is truly contrite? Might one not be proud of his contrition? And on and on. The received wisdom criticized such questionings as "scrupulosity," but Luther—or at least a part of Luther—had declared war on the received wisdom.

Marty emphasizes that Luther was not simply a reformer of ecclesiastical "abuses," of which there were many. Anticlericalism and rebelliousness against church authority were widespread. In a time of plague and social disruption, many sought the security of a loving God. "Their hungers matched that of Luther, even if they were less gifted than he at speaking up. Attacking the priestly and sacramental system was Luther's first move; assaulting the official church and questioning its divine authority came next." Marty's is a very Protestant Luther who, when the protests of his followers who joined him in rejecting pope and bishops got out of hand, turned to the princes to restore order. In handing the churches over to the protection and care of the princes, Luther expressed an abject dependence upon their power in a manner that Marty describes as "groveling." And yet the princes were also dependent upon Luther to provide a theological and moral rationale for the powers they were supposed to assume. Marty writes: "If we think of Luther as a specialist in dealing with matters of faith, we will find that he was a generalist when it came to leading in practical matters of church and state. Not a born administrator or theorist of governance, he improvised and often changed course."

After developing his ideas of the "two kingdoms" as they pertain to temporal and spiritual rule, Luther had a higher estimate than Marty of his achievement. "Not since the time of the apostles," Luther declared, "have the temporal sword and temporal government been so clearly described or so highly praised as by me." The temporal sword was fully unsheathed as Luther urged the princes to slash and slaughter without remorse in the Peasants' War that broke out in 1525. Women were raped and left to die, men were strung up on trees, children perished in the cold winter. Before it was over, as many as 100,000 were killed. Afterwards, Luther would say, "Preachers are the greatest of slayers. For they urge the authorities to execute their office strictly and punish the wicked. In the revolt I slew all the peasants; all their blood is on my head. But I pass it on to our Lord, who commanded me to speak thus."

The Anabaptists, or re-baptizers, along with the radical iconoclasts, claimed God was commanding them as well, but Luther knew better. They were vermin and flies on the dungheap, mad men and enemies of Christ. Marty is not sparing in pointing up the contradiction between Luther's claim to understand God's Word

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apart from tradition and church authority while denying the same claim made by more radical rebels. Luther's relative conservatism with respect to liturgy and the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist is attributed to his fear of instability and his dependence on the princes for protection. There was also, despite his sometimes brutish behavior and scatological language, an aesthetic sensibility, as is evident in the joy he took in music and the writing of hymns.

Marty depicts Luther as a man of extremes and contradictions, all in the service of letting God be God. Here he draws on the Luther research of the Methodist Philip Watson, who in *Let God be God* portrays a Luther who praised the love of God that might even damn him to hell, and declared against Erasmus in *The Bondage of the Will* that "God himself does evil through those who are evil." Luther's extremism was notoriously unleashed as, later in life, he turned against the Jews for refusing to accept Christ. "Luther," Marty writes, "felt licensed to use degrading imagery: that rabbis made Jews kiss, gobble down, guzzle, and worship the shit they were teaching, along with the Judas' piss of their biblical interpretations. His apocalyptic vision fired his already out-of-control imagination. He was appointing himself and his princes God's avengers."

A great strength of Marty's account is that, following the lead of his friend Mark U. Edwards, he takes very seriously the fact that Luther was convinced that he was living in the very last days. The end of the world and the final judgment were, he believed, a matter of a few years or even months away. His view of the papacy as the Antichrist plays a large part in this apocalyptic vision. It made little sense to be concerned about Christian unity, whether with Romanists or Zwinglians, or about the long-term consequences of the reordering of civil society when one is living in the last minutes of the last act of history. Luther, it seems, only grudgingly tolerated his friend Philip Melanchthon's efforts to heal the breach with Rome. It was a waste of time when time was in such short supply.

Martin Marty has written, I believe, a very good book. For a brief summary of Luther's life and work it is much superior to the popular and almost entirely adulatory *Here I Stand* by Roland Bainton. Yet there is no denying that Marty's book is marked by a distinct distaste for Luther the man and, to a lesser degree, Luther the theologian. His conclusion is curious: "Luther was a man of conservative outlook in respect to much church life, but also a person of radical expression who took extreme positions. Through the centuries since his time, many have chosen to seek a safe middle between the ambiguous and often contradictory options available to them in his legacy. Whether many can or will choose to share his boldness in the new millennium will help determine how his influence will find expression in the centuries ahead."

I say the conclusion is curious because, meaning no offense, Marty is very conspicuously a man of the "safe middle," as the middle is defined by the mainline Protestantism with which Marty identifies. It is precisely Luther's "boldness" that Marty typically depicts as extremism. The inference would seem to be that Marty is not at all sure that Luther should have much influence in the centuries ahead. Marty chose as the epigraph for his book lines from a 1940 poem by W. H. Auden on Luther:

> *"... All works, Great Men, Societies are bad,*
> *The Just shall live by faith ..." he cried in dread.*
> *And men and women of the world were glad,*
> *Who'd never cared or trembled in their lives.*

Auden was right. The Sturm und Drang of Luther was safely domesticated in Lutheranism. And Marty seems to be suggesting that it is just as well; caring and trembling are to be indulged in moderation. Oddly enough, I, as a Catholic who was once a Lutheran, have, I think, a greater respect for Luther the theologian. Few Christian thinkers have so well understood the abyss of despair that is the alternative to the utterly gratuitous love of God in Christ. Without his influence, it is doubtful that *sola gratia* would be so solidly part of Catholic orthodoxy. If only Luther had not been so reckless, so headstrong, so convinced that he alone was the oracle of God's truth, so sure that he was living in the very last days and that therefore the shattering of Christian unity was a matter of slight consequence. If only, in short, he had not been the Martin Luther fairly portrayed in Martin Marty's *Martin Luther.*

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PROTESTANTS, CATHOLICS, AND MARY

In 1937 a group of Catholic and Protestant theologians, the latter being mainly Reformed and Lutheran, launched an independent effort to explore the possibilities of Christian unity, an effort that met with considerable suspicion at the time. The company came to be known as *Le Groupe des Dombes* because it usually met at the Cistercian abbey of Nôtre Dame des Dombes, which is about twenty miles north of Lyons,

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France. The Dombes effort is in some ways similar to the project "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" in this country, which began in 1992. In distinction from the official theological dialogues, both are deliberately independent from ecclesiastical authority, while receiving encouragement from the communions to which the theologians belong. Both speak from and to their communions, but not *for* their communions. Both serve as sustained scouting expeditions, so to speak, exploring what might be possible in pursuing the unity that Christ wills for his disciples.

After six years of intense study of the subject, the Dombes Group has now issued an important book on Mary in Christian faith and life, *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints* (Paulist, 162 pp., $18.95). The book provides a balanced examination of the scriptural, historical, and dogmatic questions in a way that leads to common affirmations without compromise. It is noted that the sixteenth-century Reformers, especially Luther and Zwingli and to a lesser extent Calvin, had a vibrant Marian devotion that was largely lost in the intensification of Protestant-Catholic polemics. Moreover, on the threshold of the modern era, in the seventeenth century, there was a flourishing of "pietism" on both sides. Pietism, or a "religion of the heart," was a reaction to what was viewed as the excessive intellectualism of regnant theological orthodoxies. Among Catholics, pietism took a decidedly Marian turn. In predictable reaction, Protestant pietism expunged vestiges of Marian devotion as "Romanist." Of the nineteenth-century definition of the Immaculate Conception the authors write: "On the whole, the new dogma was well received in the Catholic world. Its proclamation served to give Roman Catholicism a more united front. For the churches of the Reformation and for Orthodoxy, however, the dogma became an added stumbling block. It would play a part in removing from Protestant piety the remaining traces of the Marian reflection and piety of the Reformers."

Mariology Is Christology

In recent years, the influence of the Second Vatican Council has moved Catholics away from attributing peculiar privileges and dignities to Mary and bound her more closely to the Church as the premier disciple of her Son. All of Mariology is Christology, and any devotion to Mary that is not centered in glorifying Christ is suspect. Today there is a popular revival of diverse forms of Marian devotion and, as the authors note, Catholics "have begun again to frequent controversial places of apparitions, despite the stern warnings of bishops." However, they add, "At the same time, we must also acknowledge the effort being made at some important places of pilgrimage (Lourdes, La Salette, etc.) to foster in the pilgrims an experience of faith that is authentic and formative. Nowadays, these pilgrimages are privileged places for the exercise of a Catholic pastoral oversight of popular Christianity."

I can testify to the truth of that. When I first visited Lourdes with the Knights of Malta, I braced myself in advance against letting my perhaps too fastidious theological sensibilities be offended by the excesses of popular piety. I need not have worried. Of course there are the predictable booths peddling every kind of pious kitsch, but even they were considerably less offensive than, say, a convention of the Christian Booksellers Association. At the shrine itself, and in the devotions surrounding the mandatory baths, the principle that Mariology is Christology could not have been more explicit. I had, I must confess, expected miracle-mongering and vulgar superstition, but the piety of the baths is solidly grounded in baptismal regeneration, and the Mass in the underground chapel, with twenty thousand or more people, many of them the sick and dying on gurneys surrounding the altar, some of them attending their final Mass, was marked by a palpable intensity of surrender to the love of God in Christ such as I have seldom experienced. Simply to recall it as I write this quite takes my breath away.

Protestants who become Catholics, or are thinking about becoming Catholics, are prone to put Marian devotion and doctrine to the test of Protestant orthodoxies. While the most theologically austere renditions of Catholic Mariology can usually pass the test, that is, I am convinced, a great mistake. In becoming a Catholic, one should be open to previously unimagined dimensions of Christian piety, far from the least of which is coming to know the Mother of God as the Church's mother, and one's own. *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints* sometimes succumbs to the aforementioned mistake. But that is perhaps understandable in that this is a dialogue with Christians for whom the Marian dimension of Christian existence has until now been shut off behind a closed and strongly barricaded door.

There are many questions to be taken up between Protestants and Catholics, and some might think the question of Mary somewhat marginal, but I believe the Dombes report is right in saying: "The discussion of the Virgin Mary makes it clear that today she is perhaps the point at which all the underlying confessional differences, especially in soteriology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and hermeneutics, become most clear. These issues are fundamental, if any are, so that when all is said and done, the ecumenical dialogue on the Virgin is a suitable locus for ascertaining our doctrinal disagree-

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ments, as it is no less suitable a locus for looking self-critically at our respective ecclesial behaviors in regard to the Mother of the Lord."

"Unique and Unparalleled"

If salvation is by God's grace alone, in what sense did Mary "cooperate" in her salvation, and ours? Is the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary scripturally defensible? If Mary was immaculately conceived, and therefore sinless, did she need a Savior? Does the assumption of Mary mean that she is, in fact, supra-human? If Christ is the one mediator, what place is there for invoking the Blessed Virgin in prayer? These are among the questions typically raised by Protestants, and here they are carefully addressed by Protestants and Catholics together. They are not always resolved to everyone's satisfaction. But the Dombes statement says, "At the same time, we recognize that these differences do not undermine our communion in one and the same faith in Christ. We are all convinced that the claims concerning the life of the Virgin from its beginning to its end must always be ordered to our understanding of the person of Christ and of the salvation Christ has brought to us."

With respect to the two dogmas defined by the Catholic Church—the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption (1950)—the authors suggest that all can agree on the following formulation: "The Catholic Church would not make the acceptance of these two dogmas a condition for full communion among the churches. It would only ask the partners with whom it would renew this communion to respect the content of these dogmas and not to judge them contrary to the gospel or to the faith, but to regard them as free and legitimate conclusions flowing from reflection by the Catholic consciousness on the faith and its internal coherence." Whether such a formulation would, in fact, be acceptable to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church is another matter. As I said, the Dombes Group is a scouting expedition exploring what may be possible.

The Group concludes that their statement "is not the fruit of an 'ecumenical compromise' that would bring together quite different points of view, but a return to the Mary of the Gospels and the mark of a greater fidelity to the Scriptures." They quote Karl Barth, probably the most influential Protestant theologian of the past century, who repeatedly suggested that Catholic Mariology is the greatest obstacle to Chris-tian unity. Barth also wrote about Mary: "There is one here who is greater than Abraham, greater than David, and greater than John the Baptist, greater than Paul and greater than the entire Christian Church; we are dealing here with the history of the Mother of God himself. This is a unique and unparalleled event." *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints* is a powerful appeal to Protestants to recover what they have lost, and to Catholics to ensure that their devotion is always ordered to the glory of the Son to whom Mary surrendered all. It is a book that deserves the careful attention of those who yearn for the unity of Christians.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Philip Jenkins is not swept off his feet by Jedediah Purdy's new book, *Being America*, but he allows that Purdy comes up with the occasional aphorism that invites reflection. For instance this: "Forgetfulness keeps a people open to the world." Purdy writes, "Forgetful America is poisoned against no people, and looks to the future in the expectation that, no matter how the country changes, it will remain itself. We will hardly remember—as we hardly remember now—having been anyone or anything else." Which inspires Jenkins to this reflection: "This amnesia manifests itself in the recurring myth of national innocence, a state that every generation believes itself to be losing. Depending on the history books you read, 'America lost its innocence' with the Whiskey Rebellion, the Civil War, the Depression, at Pearl Harbor, on September 11 . . . and generations yet unborn will probably think that only in their time did the nation lose its primal simplicity. If only they could have shared the simple, naïve faith of the early twenty-first century, a time of plain living and high thinking! A chosen nation may just need a fundamental myth of Eden and the Fall. Purdy's argument may or may not be entirely convincing, but I for one will never have the same confidence in quoting Santayana's observation that those who do not know the past are doomed to repeat it."

■ In October 2003, there was a loud outcry over the anti-Semitic remarks of Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, prime minister of Malaysia, at the opening of the Islamic Summit Conference. He said that Europeans established the State of Israel "to solve their Jewish problem." He said, "We Muslims are actually very strong. 1.3 billion people cannot be simply wiped out. The Europeans killed six million Jews out of twelve million. But today the Jews rule this world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them." And he said other despicable things, but they are little more than Islamic boilerplate. Overlooked were the substantive

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things he said about Muslim responsibility for the sorry state of the Islamic nations. For instance: "We are now 1.3 billion strong. We have the biggest oil reserve in the world. We have great wealth. We are not as ignorant as the Jahilliah who embraced Islam. We are familiar with the workings of the world's economy and finances. We control 50 out of the 180 countries in the world. Our votes can make or break international organizations. Yet we seem more helpless than the small number of Jahilliah converts who accepted the Prophet as their leader. Why? Is it because of Allah's will or is it because we have interpreted our religion wrongly, or failed to abide by the correct teachings of our religion, or done the wrong things?" And for instance: "There is a feeling of hopelessness among the Muslim countries and their people. They feel that they can do nothing right. They believe that things can only get worse. The Muslim will forever be oppressed and dominated by the Europeans and the Jews. They will forever be poor, backward, and weak. Some believe, as I have said, this is the Will of Allah, that the proper state of the Muslims is to be poor and oppressed in this world. But is it true that we should do and can do nothing for ourselves? Is it true that 1.3 billion people can exert no power to save themselves from the humiliation and oppression inflicted upon them by a much smaller enemy? Can they only lash back blindly in anger? Is there no other way than to ask our young people to blow themselves up and kill people and invite the massacre of more of our own people?" Much of the Prime Minister's speech might have been lifted from Bernard Lewis' searing critique of Islamic leadership, *What Went Wrong?* Dr. Mahathir said: "We also know that not all non-Muslims are against us. Some are well disposed toward us. Some even see our enemies as their enemies. Even among the Jews there are many who do not approve of what the Israelis are doing. We must not antagonize everyone. We must win their hearts and minds. We must win them to our side not by begging for help from them but by the honorable way that we struggle to help ourselves. We must not strengthen the enemy by pushing everyone into their camps through irresponsible and un-Islamic acts. Remember Salah El Din and the way he fought against the so-called Crusaders, King Richard of England in particular. Remember the considerateness of the Prophet to the enemies of Islam. We must do the same. It is winning the struggle that is important, not angry retaliation, not revenge. We must build up our strength in every field, not just in armed might. Our countries must be stable and well administered; must be economically and financially strong, industrially competent, and technologically advanced. This will take time, but it can be done and it will be time well spent. We are enjoined by our religion to be patient." What is truly depressing about the speech is not the conventional anti-Semitism but the controlling assumption that Islam is engaged in a "struggle" with the rest of the world, and most particularly with Christendom, and can settle for nothing less than "victory." Perhaps it was necessary for Dr. Mahathir not to question that assumption in order to get a hearing for the sensible and challenging things he had to say to the assembled Muslim rulers. That is, admittedly, a hopeful interpretation.

■ This is a welcome occasion to mention the fine series, handsomely produced, Vintage Spiritual Classics, edited by John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne. The series includes, inter alia: *The Book of Job*, *Buddhist Wisdom*, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, *The Desert Fathers*, *The Imitation of Christ*, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, *Faith and Freedom: An Invitation to the Writings of Martin Luther*, and *The Wisdom of John Paul II*. The immediate occasion is the preface by Father Joseph Koterski, S.J., of Fordham University to *Saint Thomas More*. Koterski concentrates on what More meant by conscience. He notes that most people know what they think they know about More from Robert Bolt's very impressive play and film, *A Man for All Seasons*. Bolt has More say at one point, "But what matters to me is not whether it's true or not but that I believe it to be true, or rather, not that I *believe* it, but that *I* believe it. I trust I make myself obscure?" A nice line, that, but Koterski says it quite thoroughly obscures More's understanding of conscience and why he could not assent to Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn. Here are the actual words of More after he had been found guilty and sentenced to death:

> Seeing that I see ye are determined to condemn me (God knoweth how) I will now in discharge of my conscience speak my mind plainly and freely touching my Indictment and your Statute, withal. And forasmuch as this Indictment is grounded upon an Act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and His Holy Church, the supreme Government of which, or of any part whereof, may no temporal Prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the See of Rome, a spiritual pre-eminence by the mouth of our Savior himself, personally present upon earth, only to St. Peter and his successors, bishops of the same See, by special prerogative granted; it is therefore in law, amongst Christian men, insufficient to charge any Christian man.

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Koterski offers a brief but persuasive interpretation of More's *Utopia*, and ends up by taking issue with another invention of Robert Bolt, who, at the end of his play, has More say, "Finally, it is not a matter of reason but of love." Not true, says Koterski. "For him it was *always* a matter of reason: a matter of careful discernment about principles he did not choose or create himself but which he honored as the groundwork for a reasonable decision." *Saint Thomas More* with Koterski's preface is a splendid addition to the Vintage Spiritual Classics. I am thinking about that series these days because I have just agreed to do for it the preface to Kierkegaard's *Training in Christianity*. My friend Fr. Koterski has set for me a high standard.

■ "The often extravagant ravings of anti-American hatred, the media imputations—sometimes the product of incompetence, sometimes of mythomania—the opinionated ill will that puts the United States in an unfavorable light at every turn, can only confirm for Americans the uselessness of consultation. The result is the exact opposite of what is sought. The fallacies of the anti-American bias encourage American unilateralism. The tendentious blindness and systematic hostility of most of the governments that deal with America can only lead to their own weakening, a progressive distancing from reality. And so America's confused enemies and allies alike, valuing animosity over influence, condemn themselves to impotence—and thus, in effect, strengthen the country they claim to fear." That is the vigorous summation of Jean-François Revel's *Anti-Americanism* (Encounter, 176 pp., $25.95). Revel is, among Parisian intellectuals, a genuinely independent mind in a herd of independent minds whose independence is collectively certified by their unanimous opposition to almost everything American. As the above-cited conclusion indicates, *Anti-Americanism* is a tract, but the kind of tract that restores the good reputation of political tractarianism.

■ Here is another big whopper of a book on the Kennedys to add to the pile of big whoppers on that subject. It is not easy to make the case that we really needed this one. Robert Dallek's recent eight-hundred-plus pages, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy*, revealed much about JFK's medical debilities, drug habits, and obsessive womanizing that was not generally known. I am not so sure that we learn much that we didn't know before from Thomas Maier's *The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings* (Basic, 676 pp., $29.95). The strength of the book is that it places JFK into five generations of Kennedy history, and concentrates on the specifically Irish Catholic—the two words being inseparable and sometimes indistinguishable—dimensions of the story. Of course, JFK looms largest in the tale, but Joe Sr. runs him a close second. Although he doesn't put it quite this way, Maier, author of *Dr. Spock: An American Life*, aims at countering the ways in which the Kennedy myth has been made "respectable" by downplaying the Irish Catholic, presenting JFK's career as a product of the brightest and the best. From the beginning, Maier convincingly shows, that career had a great deal more to do with the Knights of Columbus and Boston communion breakfasts than with Harvard or the *New York Times*. New to many will be Joe Sr.'s wheeling and dealing at the Vatican, and the very worldly roles played by some prelates who are depicted, I expect accurately, as being more pols than pastors. Until the bitter end, writes Maier, Cardinal Cushing of Boston was JFK's "political guardian angel." When it comes to making sense of it all, Maier seems ambivalent. He writes:

> In the fairy-tale world of Camelot politics—not even in the "psycho-biographies" of his detractors—Jack Kennedy rarely appeared to worry about the truth or consequences of sex. The Roman Catholic Church was often an unabashed, albeit unofficial, ally for his ambitions and a compliant keeper of his secrets. To many established Catholics, Camelot was encased in fond memories, part of the climb out of the old ethnic neighborhoods of the past. "It may be hard to remember the impetus that Kennedy gave to a sense of Catholic 'arrival' in America," observed theologian Richard John Neuhaus after so many of JFK's transgressions were exposed. "Despite subsequent revelations about his private life (news photographers at the time, for example, agreed not to publish pictures of him smoking cigarettes), the Kennedy myth remains the forceful statement of Catholics having made it in America."
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> But by the 1970s, the Roman Catholic hierarchy was no longer enamored with the Kennedy family or its politics. Many practicing Catholics felt increasingly alienated by the Kennedys, and they, too, seemed disillusioned by the rightward drift of their onetime followers. The Camelot myth remained strong in the minds of Americans, but it became a strangely secular one, no longer endorsed by churchmen such as Cushing but propagated by the media. For Jack's survivors, particularly his youngest brother, American society's obsessions with sex cast

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> Camelot in an uncomfortable light, and gradually changed its meaning. Camelot came to signify the glories of a lost era, the blinding light of celebrity and having sex with other celebrities or sycophants. Rather than a high-minded call to public service, as Jacqueline Kennedy said she had intended, Camelot became a parable about excess and its consequences.

Yet the book ends with an admiring depiction of the remaining Kennedys making a joint appearance at the 2000 Democratic convention and the wan suggestion that somehow, despite all, Camelot as high-minded call to public service still lives. They are attenuatedly Irish and even more attenuatedly Catholic, but the author seems still to hope for another generation of "emerald kings." As do enough Americans to provide a promising market for another big, perhaps unnecessary, but interesting book about the Kennedys.

■ Yale professor David Gelernter thinks it speaks well of our society that, when we have condemned a criminal to death, we "are in no hurry to [kill him], and will search on and on for a convincing reason not to." Not so with the severely brain damaged, those in a "vegetative" state. Not so with Terri Schiavo, whose husband wanted her dead and was only saved for a time by Governor Jeb Bush's calling of a special session of the legislature to give him authority to intervene. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Gelernter says: "What happens to the next Mrs. Schiavo? And the next plus a hundred or a thousand? How much attention will the public and the legislature be able to muster for this sort of thing over the years? The war against Judeo-Christian morality is a war of attrition. Time is on the instigators' side. They have all the patience in the world, and all the patients. If this one lives, there is always the next. After all, it's the principle of the thing." The mark of civilization, says Gelernter, is the shortening of the list of reasons that justify taking human life. But now footnotes are being added to the list. "Thoughtful people have argued: once you start footnoting innocent human life, you are in trouble. Innocent life must not be taken . . . unless (here come the footnotes) the subject is too small, sick, or depressed to complain. One footnote, people have argued, and the jig is up; in the long run the accumulating footnotes will strangle humane society like algae choking a pond. Who would have believed when the Supreme Court legalized abortion that, one generation later, only one, America would have come to this? Mrs. Schiavo's parents wanting her to live, pleading for her to live, the state saying no, and a meeting of the legislature required to pry the executioner's fingers from the victim's throat? I would never have made such an argument when the abortion decision came down, and I would never have believed it. I still can't believe it. Is this America? Do I wake or sleep?" He wakes, as many others are awakening. Late, to be sure. But, please God, not too late to turn us toward becoming a culture of life.

■ I took mainly favorable notice of Father Andrew Greeley's *Religion in Europe at the End of the Second Millennium*, in part because it was so contentiously against the grain of what "everybody knows" about the dismal decline of Christianity in Europe, meaning mainly Western Europe. Our aforementioned friend Philip Jenkins, writing in *Books & Culture*, is less patient with Greeley's contrarianism: "The issue of methodology is critical. Greeley has a thorough (if not Gradgrindian) commitment to a positivist quantitative approach, and if this leads to conclusions that seem frankly silly, then the fault must lie in public perceptions, not in the statistics. The introduction offers a gorgeously Greeleyan piece of rhetoric: 'Data from probability samples do not make for easy cocktail party chatter, but they are a lot more reliable than the repetition of clichés about "what everybody knows." Well, clichés are never worth defending, and I would be the last to reaffirm the truthfulness of 'what everybody knows.' But the argument here is that on the one side, we have Andrew Greeley with his hard statistics, and on the other we find only feather-brained dilettantes at their cocktail parties. It really is not that simple." Jenkins thinks there is another Greeley who could have greatly improved this book that "represents Greeley the social scientist to the near exclusion of Greeley the religious and cultural commentator, whose book *The Catholic Imagination* was such a delight. Readers looking for that kind of book must turn instead to Colm Tóibín's superb travelogue *The Sign of the Cross: Travels in Catholic Europe* (1994). Sometimes the journalists and novelists can tell us quite as much about social realities as the number-crunchers." Maybe we should have asked Greeley the journalist and novelist—he is also both—to review the Greeley number-cruncher's book.

■ "To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you have to draw large and startling figures." That wisdom of Flannery O'Connor is quoted by Gregory Wolfe, editor of the admirable publication *Image*, which bills itself as "a journal of the arts and religion." He goes on to suggest that, in our postmodern times, the Christian writer is more likely to be a whisperer than shouter, and he thinks that good. Many

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deplore today's absence of boldly and explicitly Christian writers, but Wolfe writes that "those critics who champion earlier cultural manifestations of muscular Christianity start to sound a bit like schoolyard bullies rather than enlightened intellectuals." I don't know whether it's right to say that Auden, O'Connor, or Graham Greene (figures Wolfe mentions) espoused "muscular Christianity," and I cannot help but wonder by whose definition of enlightenment Christians should aspire to being enlightened intellectuals. Wolfe writes, "Genuine doubt is not weakness but strength, a willingness to wrestle with the angel." I doubt therefore I am strong? Perhaps I don't understand what he means by *genuine* doubt, but surely it is faith, not doubt, that wrestles with the angel. "The decline-and-fall critics are so sure of themselves," says Wolfe, "that they don't bother to carefully sift what's out there. If they did, they'd find more kinship between the whisperers and the shouters than they have imagined." No doubt. "Artists of faith may work on smaller canvases today," he concludes, "but if they can create exquisite miniatures, then they have done their bit to redeem the time." To be sure, we must all try to do our bit, but I cannot silence the whispering suspicion that, with respect to the dearth of bold and imaginative Christian writing, Gregory Wolfe should more strongly doubt false comforts.

■ It is not simply that the English translations in the Mass tend toward banality. The problem goes back to the hurried putting together of the Paul VI Missal in Latin following the Second Vatican Council. That is the argument of "Theological Principles that Guided the Redaction of the Roman Missal" by Lauren Pristas (*The Thomist*, 67, 2003). Researching the statements of those in charge of the redaction, Pristas finds that they were quite explicit about their intention to adapt ancient texts to "the modern mind." Sin and damnation are downplayed, and the distinctions between heaven and earth, the profane and the sacred, God's grace and our efforts tend to be fudged. "The traditional [Latin] orations are highly sophisticated and stunningly concise literary compositions that overflow with surplus of meaning—connotation far outstripping denotation," Pristas writes. The redactors, however, believed that prayers should be "submissive to the principles required for a good homily: to have something to say, to know how to say it, and to stop after it has been said." It is doubtful that most of the new prayers rise even to the level of a good homily. Far from overflowing with a surplus of meaning, upon careful examination they display a deficit of meaning. A good many of the prayers in the Mass can be adequately summarized by the petition, "Help us to be the really nice people we are." By so revising the prayers from all ages, Pristas writes, "it may be the case that nearly all the texts of our missal reflect the strengths and weaknesses, the insights and biases, the achievements and limitations of but one age, our own. . . . If this is indeed so, then Catholics of today, in spite of the access made possible by vernacular celebrations, have far less liturgical exposure to the wisdom of our past and the wondrous diversity of Catholic experience and tradition than did the Catholics of earlier generations." True, the Mass was then said in Latin but the people followed it in missals containing a reasonably accurate translation of the Latin. In the rush to the vernacular, the redaction deprived people of the texts in both Latin and English. In Rome, the Congregation for Divine Worship is engaged in a painstaking reappraisal of what happened to the texts in the Paul VI Missal. A remedy for the mischief described by Lauren Pristas may be on its way. This time a little hurry might not hurt.

■ John Leo calls it "the rapid refurbishing of appalling people," and he has more than a point. In 1987, Joel Steinberg of New York City beat to death his illegally adopted six-year-old daughter. Though still in jail, he has parlayed his notoriety into a job with a cable TV show. Jayson Blair fabricated stories for the *New York Times*, and has a six-figure advance for a book telling how a "racist" press made him do it. Stephen Glass fabricated stories for the *New Republic* and other publications, which earned him a movie sale and big book contract, as well as a job writing for *Rolling Stone*, for which he wrote fiction as fact. Roman Polanski drugged and raped a thirteen-year-old girl, and then skipped the country, which did not prevent him from getting last year's Oscar for best director. Marv Albert's career was presumably shattered by a messy sex scandal, but a little more than a year later he was hired as host of *MSG Sports Desk*. And then there is Al Sharpton, co-perpetrator of the Tawana Brawley rape hoax, leader of an agitation against a Jewish store owner in which he joined with others in screaming "bloodsucking Jews" and "Jew bastards," which agitation ended with three people shot and seven dead in a fire set by a protestor. Now he is a "civil rights leader" who is addressed as "the Rev. Sharpton" in national debates with other aspirants for the presidency of the United States. Such things are to be expected, writes Leo, "in a culture with no higher standard than non-judgmentalism." Religious leaders must take a large part of the responsibility for the debasement of the Christian understanding of forgiveness into non-judgmentalism. In

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the entertainment and political worlds—the two being not easily distinguishable—we are witnessing the cultural consequences of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace." There is another interesting note, however, in Leo's worthy jeremiad. The Hall of Fame refuses to honor two great but tainted players, Pete Rose and Shoeless Joe Jackson. Leo asks, "Is raping a child less serious than betting on baseball or throwing a World Series?" An interesting question, but the Hall of Fame is about more than fame. It is about honest achievement and, as pitched to young people, about something like virtue, the latter requiring at least the absence of a blatant defiance of virtue. When watching a ball game, one has the heartening thought that there is still an activity in which it is hard to fake it. Along with the depressing thought that there are so many others in which fakery and even viciousness is the road to celebrity. Leo is undoubtedly right in urging serious people to fight "the rapid refurbishing of appalling people."

■ The death of Neil Postman, at age seventy-two, should not go unremarked. His 1985 critique of a television culture, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, is an indispensable reference for anyone alert to what we are doing to ourselves. Postman, who taught at New York University, did not call himself a Luddite, but wasn't terribly upset if others did. On the fashion of putting computers in classrooms, he wrote, "I would bar educators from talking about technical improvements until they have disclosed their reasons for offering an education in the first place. And such reasons are to be found in places where machines do not dwell." In *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982) he argued that television was destroying the distance between childhood and adulthood, since young and old are both dependent on the same source of information and entertainment. Finally, this from the 1985 book: "When a population becomes distracted by trivia, when cultural life is redefined as a perpetual round of entertainments, when serious public conversation becomes a form of baby-talk, when, in short, a people become an audience and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk; culture-death is a clear possibility." He did not call himself a prophet, and did not like it when others did, but many do, for understandable reasons.

■ John Wilson began the series in 2000, and now we have *The Best Christian Writing 2004* (Jossey-Bass, 216 pp., $15.95 paper). It includes three articles from FT: Jody Bottum's "Dakota Christmas," Philip Jenkins' "A New Religious America," and Wilfred McClay's "The Continuing Irony of American History." All three are deserving of the honor, although I might have included at least ten others that we published in the past year. But then, John Wilson makes the editorial calls, and it is important to be reminded that fine writing is not limited to FT. Again this year, there are more articles from FT than from any other publication, including *Books & Culture*, which is no slouch when it comes to fine writing, and of which John Wilson is editor. One might infer that he is a more disinterested judge than I.

■ "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." These words of Psalm 130 have puzzled many. If God is so ready to forgive, it is thought, then we need not fear Him. On the contrary: if there is no forgiveness, if we are indelibly marked by and held accountable for our iniquities, our situation is hopeless, we cannot stand. And if our situation is hopeless, forget about God. In some Christian traditions, a very sharp distinction is made between law and gospel. In this view, the law is what God commands and the gospel is God's forgiveness for our failing to obey his commands. The law is bad news, the gospel is good news. The bad news comes first, and then comes the good news. But Psalm 130 suggests a different sequence. Only when we know our situation is not hopeless, when we know there is forgiveness, dare we face up to our iniquities. Because we know there is forgiveness, we are able to confess our sins. Last month I commented on the admirable action of the Southern Baptist Convention in publicly repudiating its pro-abortion resolutions of many years ago, and asking the forgiveness of God and of the minority who then held fast to the pro-life position. Now the bishops of the Catholic Church in Africa, meeting on Senegal's notorious Goree Island where slaves were shipped off to the New World, have held a ceremony of repentance and forgiveness for the role of Africans in the slave trade. This is part of the "purification of memories" for which John Paul II has called so persistently. The report of the bishops says, "The trade of Blacks is one of the most odious acts . . . of human history, be it for its dimensions or the human disasters it caused, or because of the mentalities and behaviors that allowed them. . . . Among these mentalities and behaviors we, for our part, include in the first place the mentalities and behaviors of ourselves, Blacks." I am not aware of any similar statement made by Africans. To be sure, the complicity of Africans in the trans-Atlantic slave trade came about through white traffickers meeting a white demand for slaves.

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But the trade could not have been sustained without the cooperation of "Africans who sold their brothers," as Archbishop Theodore Sarr of Senegal said. The action on the Island of Goree underscores our human solidarity in both sin and grace. And it underscores the truth that reconciliation begins with honesty, and honesty is made possible by the promise of forgiveness.

■ Nicholas D. Kristof, columnist for the *New York Times*, is to be credited for having noted the importance of religion in American life. But then there is this: "One of the most poisonous divides is the one between intellectual and religious America." Mr. Kristof quickly adds, "I'm not denigrating anyone's beliefs." Of course not. But he's worried that, for instance, over 90 percent of Americans believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. He cites "the great Yale historian and theologian" Jaroslav Pelikan who says, correctly, that early writings such as the Gospel of Mark and the letter to the Galatians do not mention the virgin birth. Kristof writes, "But mostly, I'm troubled by the way the great intellectual traditions of Catholic and Protestant churches alike are withering, leaving the scholarly and religious worlds increasingly antagonistic. . . . The heart is a wonderful organ, but so is the brain." Representing the great intellectual tradition, we are given to understand, is his grandfather, "a devout and active Presbyterian elder who nonetheless believed firmly in evolution and regarded the virgin birth as a pious legend." It would likely surprise Mr. Kristof that Jaroslav Pelikan, formerly a Lutheran and now Orthodox, firmly believes in the virgin birth. As did and do almost all of the great figures in the Christian intellectual tradition, Mr. Kristof's grandfather apparently excepted. Mr. Kristof undoubtedly means well, but one may be permitted to suggest that one of the unhappiest divides in American life is between thoughtful Christians and pundits who are embarrassingly ignorant about the Christian intellectual tradition.

■ Here's another "Volume 1, Number 1." It is *Nova et Vetera* (from the new and the old that Jesus says the scribe will bring out of his treasures), now issued semi-annually in big (about 250 pages) issues, and aiming to become a quarterly. Actually, it was started with a French edition in 1926 but the nova here is its appearance in English. Published under the auspices of Ave Maria College in Michigan, the focus is on matters Thomistic—theological, philosophical, and moral. For more information, contact *www.aquinas.avemaria.edu.*

■ Mayor Michael Bloomberg has banned smoking in bars, restaurants, and even private clubs. In self-righteous enthusiasm over his having stopped smoking, he declares that the ban on secondhand smoke will save "literally tens of thousands of lives." Allegedly tough, independent, don't-push-me-around New Yorkers have, for the most part, supinely acquiesced. Facts seem not to matter. In the May 17 issue of the *British Medical Journal*, two American epidemiologists, James Enstrom of UCLA and Geoffrey Kabat of the State University of New York, report on a massive study of 35,561 smokers and their nonsmoking spouses over forty years. They report that secondhand smoke might lead to a small increase in the risk of lung cancer, but that the commonly claimed 30 percent increase in the risk of heart disease—the purported cause of almost all the deaths attributed to secondhand smoke—is not supported by the evidence. I do not expect that the ban imposed by Mayor "Doomsberg," who is again driving the city into insolvency, will be rescinded any time soon. But it should not go unprotested. It is another abandonment of freedom, common sense, and civilized accommodation perpetrated by those who think themselves anointed to run other people's lives. Please note that I do not, as is now common in comments by those who agree, stipulate that I am a nonsmoker. I intend to continue enjoying a cigar where I am permitted to do so. It is a very curious idea that only those who do not participate in a pleasant and innocent activity are entitled to protest its being outlawed.

■ So what country in the world has the fastest growing Jewish population? Most people would not guess that it is Germany, but so it is. Before World War II, there were a half million Jews in Germany; by the end of the war 15,000 were left. In 1990 there were 33,000 and the number today is a little over 200,000. Most are immigrants from what was the evil empire to the East, although there are significant numbers from other countries, including Israel. Julius H. Schoeps, who heads the Moses Mendelssohn Center in Potsdam, says, "The biblical paradigm for this rebirth was the return of Jews to Israel," referring to the end of the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C. The idea of Germany as the promised land is counterintuitive, but there you have it. Before the war, German Jews were thoroughly assimilated and unprepared for a regime that would treat them as an alien race. Schoeps says, "The intellectual heritage of German Jews included Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and Heinrich Heine, while this new Jewish community is at home with Tolstoy and Gogol." Asked what this means for the next generation, he says, "Probably

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Goethe, Schiller, and Heine, plus Gogol and Tolstoy—not a bad prospect, don't you think?" He's right about that, although one may hope they have also taken Dostoevsky to heart. He best understood the tangled ways of evil, death, resurrection, and the fragility of history.

■ Feminist twistings and turnings (continued). It was not long ago—indeed it continues today—that feminist writers celebrated the neglected heroines of the Bible. The God of Abraham became "the God of Abraham and Sarah," and so forth. Such celebrations, while sometimes misguided, had their commendable aspects. The world does not have enough heroes and heroines, and none should be neglected. The latest turn, however, is reflected in Gale Yee's *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Women as Evil in the Hebrew Bible*, from Fortress Press. The Bible, says Yee, is full of "wicked women" and she offers a "startling explanation" of why that is so. "These women function as 'sexual metaphors' and 'symbolic alibis' for the conflicts and blunders of the male actors who held socioeconomic, religious, and political power." Wouldn't you know it. Gender conflicts, she says, might be understood as "deflected forms of class conflict." Through all the twistings and turnings is the abiding presence of Karl Marx, the one dead, white, European male who gets a pass.

■ A *New York Times* story refers to the war in Sudan as a "pet cause of many American religious conservatives." Imagine, writes Allen Hertzke, political scientist at the University of Oklahoma, the *Times* describing the plight of Soviet Jewry as a "pet cause" of American Jews or apartheid in South Africa as a "pet cause" of African Americans. For twenty years, the civil war in Sudan has killed two million people, displaced five million, and revived the slave trade. The war is between the Islamic regime in Khartoum and the mainly Christian south of Sudan. Under intense pressure from Christian human rights groups in this country, a pact has recently been signed that may end the war. One might think that would be headline news, but it is buried in the back pages, if it is reported at all. After all, it is only a pet cause of religious conservatives.

■ "Will the Irish of the twenty-first century in their daily practice abandon that true faith and that true Church their ancestors died for? Will American materialism and gross pagan immorality, disguised as personal autonomy and moral neutrality, finally succeed and win the hearts of the Irish, where Oliver Cromwell and Great Britain failed?" That's Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria, Illinois, speaking at an outdoor Mass to about a thousand people gathered by the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Citing abortion, general decadence, and relentless attacks on Catholicism, Jenky asked, "Why do we as Catholics not stand up and fight and defend our faith? What will it take to finally get us mad?" The congregation did stand up with a lengthy ovation. One cannot resist an observation on Oliver Cromwell playing Peoria. More seriously, while some Catholics will criticize the bishop's "demagoguery," pointing out the importance of dialoguing with the culture, I am inclined to the view that he was helpfully specifying the conditions of respect and self-respect that make authentic dialogue possible.

■ Father Richard S. Vosko has played a prominent role in the renovation of numerous Catholic churches. Critics say he is a perpetrator of the stripping of the altars, and refer to his renovations as wreckovations. He explains his approach in the November 3, 2003 issue of *America*, "Building and Renovating Places of Worship." He speaks of "the emerging church," and repeatedly of the "evolving church" that is "a church in the process of redefining itself." He fears a return to "the styles of preconciliar churches," and urges readers to "embrace the stimulating, challenging, and evolving self-image of the church today." He says the Church as a sacrament of unity means that pro-lifers and pro-choicers, gays and straights, married and divorced are "breathing in the word of God together" and "all are sharing in the holy Eucharist together." And then there is this: "The sacrament of unity is defined less by details and more by the mystery of the religious phenomenon—the assembly of a diverse people sustaining one another because of their undying belief in a loyal, ever-present God." That nicely encapsulates a thoroughly anthropocentric understanding of the Church and her worship. We are the mystery. Church and liturgy are defined by the very human event, by "the religious phenomenon" of our assembled diversity. It is not Christ sustaining us, but we sustaining one another. And we do that because we believe in a loyal God. The original meaning of "loyal" is faithful allegiance to a higher sovereignty. In this connection, it would seem to suggest that God is loyal to the higher sovereignty of us, the individual and collective Self that is the mystery of the religious phenomenon by which the sacrament is effected. Wading through the muddled effusions of Fr. Vosko's article, it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the evolving church and the defining sacramental reality is the worship of our wondrously diverse selves. His prescriptions for building and renovating places of worship, it logically follows, are

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perfectly attuned to the Church of Us. That the Catholic Church still thinks of herself as the Church of Jesus Christ, one is given to understand, is a lamentable consequence of our failing to embrace "the stimulating, challenging, and evolving self-image of the church today." What Fr. Vosko proposes sounds very much like a worship space for the cult of communal narcissism. I have told the story before of Avery Cardinal Dulles being in a church where he saw a banner declaring, "God Is Other People." He sorely wished that he had a magic marker with him so that he could insert a very prominent comma after "Other."

■ Archbishop Sean O'Malley has been generally well received in Boston. Even by the deeply anti-Catholic *Boston Globe*, whose anti-Catholicism, it should be remembered, goes back to the nineteenth century, long before it was taken over by the *New York Times*. Part of the reception can be attributed to the way in which his predecessor, Bernard Cardinal Law, was so viciously treated by the media, working hand in glove with hungry lawyers. By contrast with the depiction of Law, almost anybody would look good, or at least much better. But O'Malley's personal manner is part of the favorable reviews thus far, including his wearing of his simple Franciscan habit. Then there is his decision not to live in the archiepiscopal residence but in the simpler rectory near the cathedral. I have heard the criticism that the decision is a piece of humbler-than-thou showboating, but I don't think so. As O'Malley has explained, there is a symbolic importance in the bishop being near his cathedral. He is right, too, when he says that the rather grand residence of the archbishop was important when immigrant Catholics felt the need to demonstrate that they had really arrived in America. That was a long time ago. Now Boston Catholics, and Catholics elsewhere, are, if anything, too much at home in America. The Archbishop's more modest quarters can serve as a countersign to prevailing comfort and affluence. This is a sticky point with some bishops. Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre (Long Island, New York) took a media shellacking when, upon his arrival, he built a handsome conference and dining area in his residence. Pundits amused themselves by referring to him as, among other things, "Mansion Murphy." Bishops need a place where they can meet and offer hospitality, but the lesson is that it's probably best these days not to locate it in their personal residence. The late John Cardinal O'Connor used to voice his guilt feelings about living in the fine residence behind St. Patrick's Cathedral. We disagreed about that. His actual living quarters on the top floor were very modest, and the rest of the house was composed mainly of office space and reception areas. Anyway, the residence is physically part of the cathedral, where the archbishop should be. Then there is Francis Cardinal George of Chicago. A while back he let it be known that he would like to sell the big, rambling, dysfunctional archiepiscopal mansion and move into simpler quarters. You would think he might have been hailed for giving up one of the more conspicuous trappings of high office. On the contrary, there was a public hullabaloo against his abandoning a landmark. "The Cardinal Archbishop has always lived there. It's part of Chicago's identity." And so forth. When it comes to where and how bishops should live, it sometimes seems they can't win for losing.

■ European anti-Americanism has come in for a great deal of deserved attention this past year. It must be admitted that also some of the statements issuing from the Vatican in the period leading up to regime change in Iraq, and since, smack of vulgar anti-Americanism. That does not include the statements of the Pope. I say that not only because I do not wish to criticize the Pope, which is also true, but because his purpose is so manifestly clear: to avoid war, to be sure, but also to avoid any suggestion that the papacy is the leader of those whom Osama bin Laden calls "the Crusaders" in an open-ended clash of civilizations with Islam. In fact, not since Columbus set sail has a pope had such a hopeful view of America as does John Paul II. This, too, is well documented in George Weigel's magnificent biography, *Witness to Hope*. This was among the subjects of conversation at dinner the other evening with Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete and a few young people associated with Communion and Liberation. CL, as it is called, is a vibrant renewal movement founded many years ago in Italy by Father Luigi Giussani (now age eighty-one) and currently growing around the world, and not least in the U.S. Msgr. Albacete, a native of Puerto Rico and the movement's national chaplain, is a remarkable priest to whom the word "colorful" is inevitably attached. Rotund to the point of Falstaffian, he wears his immense theological learning lightly, and wherever he goes he creates a convivium of spiritual exploration that young people find irresistible. (See the FT notice of his *God at the Ritz* in January 2003). But putting Msgr. Albacete aside, which is not easy, the conversation turned to Fr. Giussani's view of America as "providentially" chosen for a time such as this. World predominance and Christian vitality combine to make America the heir to Europe as Europe was once heir to Jerusalem and

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Athens. The vision is not unlike that proposed in historian Christopher Dawson's schema of "the ages of the Church." And it is not unlike the view of many evangelical Protestants that America is the base for the relaunching of world evangelization, except that Fr. Giussani and CL are Catholic to the core. A recent issue of CL's monthly magazine, *Traces*, sympathetically discusses philosopher Richard Rorty's utopian dream, inspired by the unbridled optimism of Dewey and Whitman, of a future infinitely open to human improvement. There is something so attractively American about Rorty, the author says, but his dream is purchased at the price of "the negation of reality as a given." Reality is a limit, but in the incarnational entrance of the Divine into the limited, reality is also the opening to the infinite. "Reality responds." This theme of human desiring and divine response is at the heart of the distinctive spirituality of CL. It is a movement for what today are called religious "seekers," but for seekers who want to find. Msgr. Albacete describes CL as "Opus Dei for bad Catholics." Each summer in Rimini, in Northern Italy by the Adriatic Sea, hundreds of thousands of young people are gathered by CL in a raucously intense carnival of seeking and finding. The movement is strongly supported by John Paul II, and my hunch is that Americans are just beginning to hear about a force for renewal that, not incidentally, holds the promise of renewing also our sense of providentially appointed responsibility as Americans.

■ I don't know how interested you are in onomastics. (For those who aren't interested at all, onomastics is the study of names and their origins.) But, in response to my annual report on how boys and girls are being named, Father Paul Mankowski, who teaches in Rome and is interested in and knowledgeable about at least a dozen fields I've never heard of, had this to say: "On names for children. You write that 'girls get the glitzy and frivolous names while boys are named more seriously, usually for biblical figures.' There is a sense in which this reflects the biblical tradition itself. Almost without exception, male Israelites had names which express some theological content: 'My God is Justice' 'YHWH is Lord,' etc. And more often than not, Israelite women were named for spices, jewels, and cute animals: 'heifer' (Leah), 'ewe' (Rachel), 'honeybee' (Deborah = Melissa in Greek), 'gazelle' (Tabitha)—or they had names of endearment: 'my sweetness' (Naomi), 'my delight is in her' (Hepzibah), 'princess' (Sarah). There's a sense in which it would seem that different emotions and purposes are to the fore in naming baby boys and baby girls, though after the first century it seems both Christians and Jews began to name babies of both sexes after biblical or religious figures." So I suppose that, at least with respect to the names of girls, we may be witnessing a return to biblical, or at least Old Testament, practice.

■ I, too, have heard this attributed to W. H. Auden: "We are here on earth to do good to others. What the others are here for, I don't know." Nigel Rees, the ever helpful quote sleuth, traces it back to Vivian Foster, a British music hall performer famous for his humorous imitations of Anglican clergy, who said it when Auden was only about fifteen years old. So that should settle that. Also from Mr. Rees's oft-mentioned—at least oft-mentioned here—*The "Quote . . . Unquote" Newsletter* comes this, apropos my recent reflection on wild moralists in the animal kingdom. The author is William Plomer.

In the vegetarian guesthouse
All was frolic, feast, and fun;
Eager voices were enquiring,
"Are the nettle cutlets done?"
Peals of vegetarian laughter,
Husky, wholesome, wholemeal bread;
Will the evening finish with a
Rush of cocoa to the head?

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Phone: (757) 420-5314
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Sources: "Catholic Sectarianism," *Commonweal*, October 24, 2003.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: Jenkins on Purdy, *Books & Culture*, March/April 2003. Gelernter on Schiavo, *Wall Street Journal*, October 22, 2003. Greeley, *Books & Culture*, May/June 2003. Gregory Wolfe on Christian writers, *Image*, Number 39. John Leo on appalling people, *www.townhall.com*, October 13, 2003. Goree Island and Psalm 130, *Zenit*, October 10, 2003. Kristof on virgin birth, *New York Times*, August 15, 2003. Jews in Germany, United Press International, June 6, 2003. Sudan as "pet cause," *Wall Street Journal*, October 10, 2003. Bishop Jenky on Irish in Peoria, CNS, September 4, 2003.

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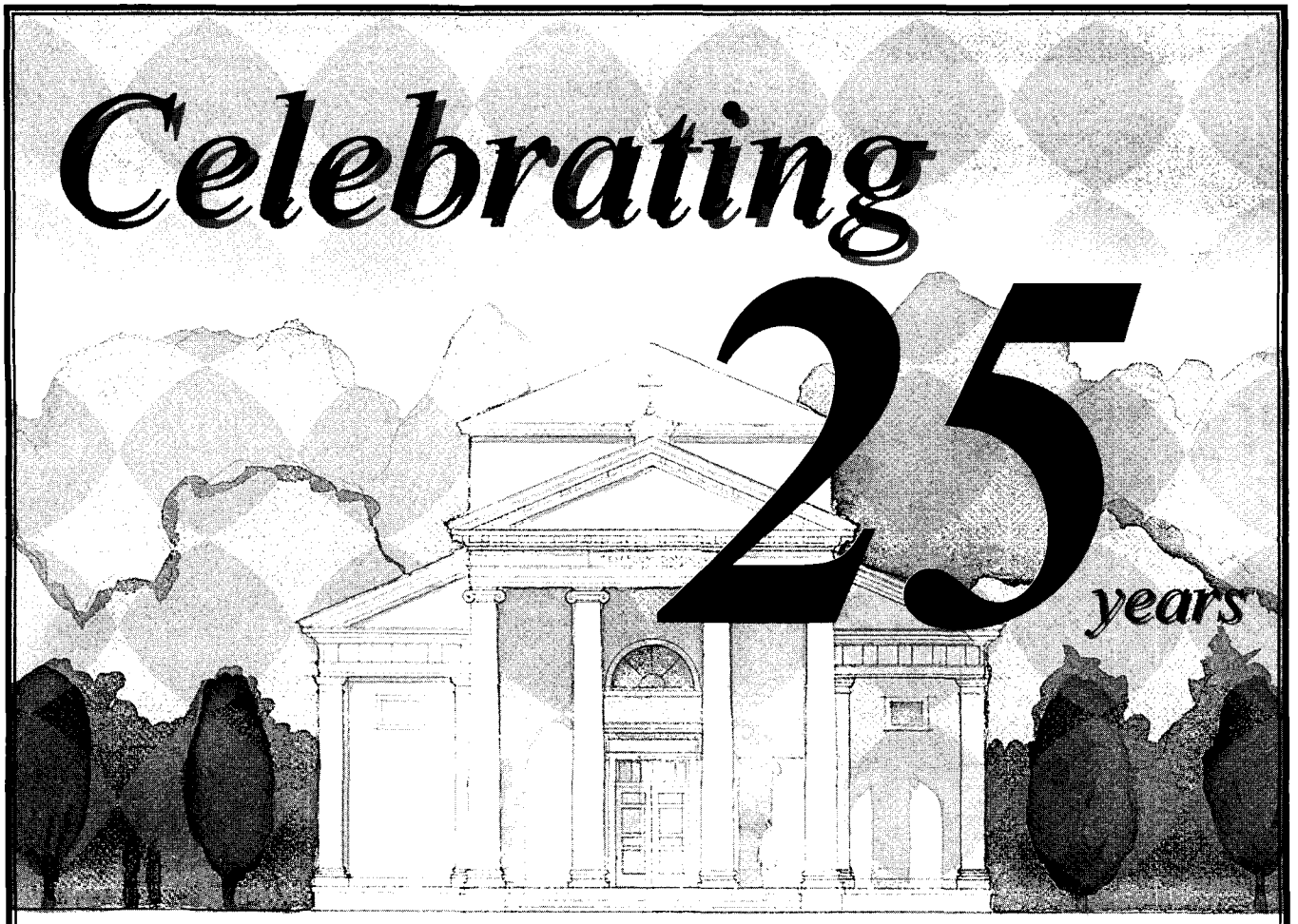

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